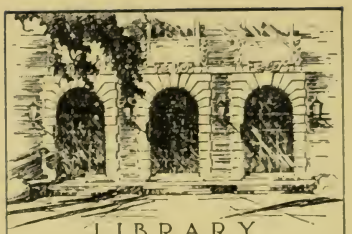

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TRUE TO THE LIFE.

VOL. II.

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TRUE TO THE LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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TRUE TO THE LIFE.

CHAPTER XXV.

"The thunder rolls, lie hush'd the prostrate world,
Whilst cloud on cloud returns the solemn hymn."

THOMSON.

LEAH sat up on the side of her bed in the turret, and heard the carriages driving off, with the impatient hope that it would soon be over, and she might return home, after having undressed Lady Barbara. She had not slept, and had wept till no tears now expressed the deep sorrow of her soul. But she was exhausted; and when her rival came up, wearied and cross from her unsuccessful campaign against the gallant soldier, Leah was not sorry, when the jewels had been put back into their cases which she unclasped from Lady Bab's arm, remembering every expression of admiration with which Sir Edgar had fastened them on, to retire to the turret-room, and lose the remembrance of her woe in sleep.

Lady Barbara had already curled herself in her

down bed like a dormouse. "At any event," she said drowsily, "I have Sir Edgar; though I should have preferred that celebrated soldier, without a sixpence, to the ten thousand a year of the other. The man must be a fool not to admire me more than that skimmed-milk kind of girl, Rose!" And with that comfortable conviction she fell asleep.

When Sir John and his party were about to return home, a serious difficulty had presented itself in the state of Mrs. Mowbray's coachman, who had done such homage to the hospitality of the Holmes that he was unable to mount the box. Sir John Moore had come in his own carriage with his servant, and now proposed to put him in the place of the recreant coachman, and to drive himself home. This arrangement was accepted gratefully by Mrs. Mowbray, especially as the muttering of the thunder made her anxious to attain the shelter of her own roof without delay.

Sir John was not afraid of thunder. He liked to drive slowly, and examine the face of the country—but not with reference to the beauties of its aspect. He looked to see where this plain might make a convenient battle-field—this rising ground a good protection for troops—this clump of trees a capital place for an ambush. As he drove on, he observed that his horse had become suddenly lame in the off fore-leg, and saw simultaneously a youth walking on in front of him at a swinging pace, carrying two

bundles, one larger than the other, which was tied in a handkerchief white in colour, and fine.

"Hi!" cried the K.C.B. to the pedestrian. "Just look at my horse's fore-foot, my lad."

"A stone, sir," said Perth; and, dropping the foot, he proceeded to smash a large flint with a bigger stone, and with the sharp point inserted under the intrusive substance, he turned it out of its embedding in the hoof.

"Thank you, my man. I am going to Creek Side; if that is your way, you may jump up, and I will give you a ride."

Perth blushed, and jumped up, as permitted.

"Are you frightened?" said Sir John, when a nearer peal of thunder seemed to shake the earth, and the horse plunged forward, terrified by the noise and the sulphurous smell in the air.

"Soho!" said the driver to the horse—not accustomed to stand fire, evidently. "I used to tie my horse up to a cannon when it was fired, to teach it not to jump about for nothing, when I was first in the presence of the enemy."

"Was not that rather cruel, sir, to the horse?" said Perth, who thought how indignant he should have been had any one treated the old blind pony with so little consideration.

"Cruel!" replied Sir John, musing; "well, perhaps it was. It never struck me before—men do so many cruel things in warfare."

"For all that," said Perth, "I would give half my life to be in a battle, and to fight."

The affability of his companion had loosened the tongue of the half-starved youth. Sir John looked round on him with a sad smile at the enthusiasm of boyhood. That feeling had died out of his mind now. He was glad to fight, but not from the fine animal instinct of adventure and combativeness. Sir John's desire for war was as a means to an end.

"What do you know of fighting?" he said.

"Not much—only with my fists," Perth said, remembering the battle of the eggs, in which his clenched hand had flattened the nose of the young baronet—"but I love to read the battles in the Iliad."

"In the Iliad? Do you read the Iliad?" And he looked down on the mended knees of his companion's clothes. Then, without waiting for an answer, he continued, "What have you in that delicate handkerchief—a chicken?"

Perth looked up full of wonder.

"I did not know it showed through," said he; and seeing that it did not, he was still more puzzled.

"Perhaps, when you finish the chicken, you will give me the handkerchief; I will pay you well for it. I see the initials 'R. E.' on it: is your name Robert Edwards?"

"It is not my handkerchief—at least, it was not; but it was given to me, and I cannot part with it."

"Your young woman must be of rank, my boy, to wear such fine cambric."

"It is not a young woman at all," said Perth. "It is a lady who saw that I was nearly starved, and who gave me the chicken in charity. If you please, sir, I had rather not speak of it. Folks don't like to own that they are starving."

"Right, boy, every way. But now, what are you going to do?"

Perth was silent, for his temper had been ruffled, and he could not recover his equanimity immediately.

"Well, here we are at the turning down to Creek Side."

They had come to the top of a hill now, and Perth turned round to give one more look at the locality of his home before he jumped off the coach-box. Sir John turned to see why an anxious expression had gathered on the youth's Saxon face, and observed some clouds of smoke rising against the still morning sky.

"What are you looking at?"

"I don't think it is anything of consequence, sir. There was a field of weeds, put up in heaps, that they were going to burn to-day nigh the Holmes, and I was looking at the smoke of it."

"Well, good luck to you, my lad! If at any time I can give you another lift, and one more to the purpose, don't scruple to apply to me, for

the sake of the owner of that cambric handkerchief."

His horse sprang forward down the hill, scared by a peal of thunder louder than the preceding ones. Perth looked after him with regret. He had not liked his seeming to laugh at him about the handkerchief; but he had spoken kindly to him at the last, and Perth's heart yearned for some support.

As he set on his course again, he wondered if Leah or old Molly were thinking of him. "It must be in their dreams if they do," he said, "for 'tis too early for them to be awake." That beautiful young lady, whose arm had supported his head when he had fainted, would she ever think of him again? He rather hoped not. The circumstances were rather humiliating to his boyish vanity to have been indebted to her, probably, for life; for without the wine so opportunely administered, his insensibility might have passed into death. He wondered why he had ceased to worship the idea of *Arithmetica*, and excused himself for his inconstancy by the recollection that it was a beautiful image to whom he had devoted his thoughts, and that she had been marvellously altered in her three years' absence, whilst Miss Elliot was more changed still. How very lovely she was! That fine gentleman had seemed to admire her—that fine gentleman whose name he had never heard. How could he apply, in the future, to a person who had never told him

where he was to be found, nor how addressed? This had been an oversight of Sir John, who had the not unnatural idea that his name was well known.

Perth's memory lingered on the fair creature he had last seen looking on his face with an expression of tender pity—whose money was to aid him in his journey to seek a livelihood.

As he walked on with the springing step of eighteen, he wove brilliant day-dreams. He would win wealth and fame, and come back and lay these acquisitions at her feet. I am not sure that he was not selfish enough to wish that she should be reduced to poverty, that he might raise her again to affluence by the result of his own exertions.

He came near a farm-house now, and, as the rain had begun, he turned into a shed, and seated himself on the shafts of a cart whilst he counted, once more, the money Miss Elliot had given him; and, taking from his bundle a housewife, furnished with needles and thread, the gift of Leah, he sewed the two guineas into his waistcoat, and kept the silver to supply his more pressing necessities.

"I ought to earn my bread before I have spent the loose change," said Perth.

Then he devoured part of his chicken, and put the rest aside till he could eke it out with bread. Perhaps he might obtain some at once; and he went round to the kitchen door of the farmer, and asked

the servant, who had just opened it, if her master would sell him a pennyworth of bread. The owner of the farm, who was lacing on his highlows, replied that he was not a baker, and desired the maid to cut the lad a slice for love. Perth received it very gratefully, begging for a cup of water, and declined the beer which the farmer proposed to substitute for it. The farmer had finished his highlows by this time, and came to the door, from a feeling of curiosity, to see the youth who could prefer water to beer.

"Thee doesn't look as if thee could do a day's work in the hayfield, lad! Canst mow?"

"Yes, I can mow pretty well," said Perth.

"Well, I can give thee work till haysell is over. Then thee must go."

Perth's only objection was, that he had not put a sufficient distance between himself and home; but an instant's reflection showed him the fallacy of the objection. It was unlikely that his father would institute any search for him, and did he do so, the farm stood in a retired situation; and, as the nearest market town was not Stoneham, there was little chance of its being known that he was amongst the gang of haymakers. So he agreed for rather a less rate of wages than any other boy of eighteen would have demanded, because his starvation had materially diminished his strength. He threw his whole energy into his work, however, and satisfied his

mates and his employer. He was proud and happy when he received his wage, which, from the strictness with which his father had held him, was the first payment he had ever obtained for his labour.

His master advised him, when his hay was stacked, to travel towards London, in the neighbourhood of which he might receive a larger weekly sum for his work, and regretted that he had now too many men to admit of his keeping him.

Sometimes Perth took his place in a waggon for the payment of a few pence—a plan which he considered cheaper than walking, from tenderness to his shoes, which he knew he should find some difficulty in replacing, without encroaching on the reserved two guineas given him by Miss Elliot.

It was by one of these conveyances he reached Stratford-le-Bow one sultry afternoon, and, having paid his fare to the waggoner, he was set down in the environs of the town, and near the play-ground of a boys' school. This was railed in and turfed, and on it about a dozen boys of various ages, from ten to seventeen, were shouting, laughing, and quarrelling, as most boys employ themselves when left alone. Perth looked at them with wonder and some degree of envy. He had never been a boy, he thought. His father had never permitted him to play or associate much with other boys, and he grudged the loss of the joy he might have had. Presently he saw a small lad crawling along, with a furtive glance on

each side of him, very much as a little dog bears himself who has obtained a bone which he is trying to conceal from the observation of big dogs of aggressive dispositions. He came along by the rails near which Perth was lingering, and Perth saw that the object to be concealed was a book, which, being too large for his diminutive pocket, he held down by the side of his leg.

So soon as he was perceived, his tormentors shouted to him to come and pick up balls, and exhorted him not to skulk, but to come and play like the rest of them. He began to run, and got back to the shelter of the house before he was overtaken. Perth passed on. On the other side of the house there was a large garden containing some noble trees. He saw the little boy climb up one of these, and drop into the road, which he crossed, and crawling through the hedge on the opposite side, he sank down breathless, and began to sob. There was a gate further down, and Perth, leaping over it, went up to the weeper and sat down by him. The boy looked at Perth's soil-stained clothes, and was alarmed at his neighbourhood, but the sweetness of his open countenance reassured him. The book which he had tried to conceal from his companions was open on his knees, and wet with tear-drops.

"What's the matter?" said the elder boy. He stooped over the book, and saw it was a worn copy of Cornelius Nepos. "Why are you crying?"

"It is that I am too small to thrash any one," was the reply.

"Bless me!" said Perth, too ignorant of boy-world to understand the tyrannical wish or its cause. "Why do you wish to thrash any one?"

"Because I can't do my lesson."

"Would thrashing any one help you?" replied the young traveller. "Because you may thrash me and welcome!" and he laughed.

This was an unfortunate speech, for the boy thought his companion was laughing at him, and burst into fresh tears and sobs.

"You would not say that if I was strong enough to hurt you really," he said at length, with various choking interruptions. "And that's what they all feel, and so I can't get help in my lessons."

"I don't understand," replied Perth.

"Why!" said the child impatiently, "I can do sums better than the big boys; when it is arithmetic-day and they have long division to do, they poke me to do it for them under the sly, and if I don't do the sums for them, they wallop me when they get out into the play-ground. Now I never can do my Latin, and I can't make any boy help me, because I can't wallop any of them. When I can get through the house into the garden without being found out, I come to this little corner to try and puzzle it out by myself."

"Give me the book," said Perth. "I will show

you how it goes; and you will understand, as one never forgets a puzzle which has been once explained. Have you looked out the words?"

"Yes." And the boy gave the meanings of each; but, like a string of beads of different sizes, which, if unstrung, are difficult to place in proper juxtaposition, he knew not how to put the words in sequence, so as to make sense.

"It seems easy enough now!" the boy said, wiping his eyes with a little shame that he had not found it out before.

"Now," suggested Perth, "let me read you the English of the next lesson, and mark the nominative cases, verbs, and substantives for you as they should follow, that you may not be distressed to-morrow also."

It was done, and then the child, with a mingled look of anxiety and relief—relief in the present, anxiety for the future—said, "Oh! I wish you were going to stay here always!"

"I cannot do that, I fear," said Perth, smiling. "If I can find any work in the neighbourhood I should not mind helping you sometimes."

"The master's handy man is going away. Would you not do in his place?"

"I do not know what his place is as to work."

"Oh! he works in the garden, and sees to the horse and chaise, and does odd jobs; but I'm afraid you won't be smart enough in your clothes."

Perth hated the purloiner of his best suit in his heart. "I will try," he replied. "I can but ask. What is your schoolmaster's name?"

"Mr. Tracey."

"Well, good-bye, now! If I were you I would go back, and pick up some balls for the big fellows. You can do your lessons now, you know."

Little Craven (for that was his name) got up slowly to follow his new friend's advice; and Perth, going to the back of the house, asked permission to speak to Mr. Tracey. The servant-girl looked at his clothes, and hesitated; looked in his face, and, relenting, ushered him into a small study, where sat the schoolmaster, his bald head covered with a black skull-cap, under which his white locks flowed down to the collar of his brown coat.

"Please, sir," said the maid, in a sharp, shrill voice, "there's a young man after the place;" adding, in a murmur to Perth, "Speak up; he's awful deaf."

Mr. Tracey looked up through his spectacles with clear, pale blue eyes; the sounds had distracted his attention, which had been enchained to some characters in an open dictionary which lay on the table before him. The old man had fully intended to ask Perth what his qualifications were for his service, but his tongue formed only the sounds by which his thoughts were occupied,—"Va mey'ah mubárakah—may this be a most blessed year to the believers."

"He ain't mad," said the girl encouragingly to Perth. "He often talks stuff like that."

"I am come to offer to try your place, sir, if you please to take me."

Mr. Tracey summoned his wits from their wool-gathering, and looked at him blandly.

"What can you do?" but before the answer had reached him, his white, bony finger was painfully travelling down the lines of Arabic characters.

Perth waited patiently, and said in a soft, distinct voice, very pleasant to the ear of the deaf, "I think I could do anything to please you, sir."

"Character, boy! character!"

"My last master would speak a good word for me, if you would inquire, sir. He is Mr. Simmons, at the Sandyke Farm, Essex."

Mr. Tracey now looked up in earnest. "My other man is leaving me because it is his custom to bring wine and spirits from the town for the older pupils. If he does not obey them they beat him."

"I will not disobey you, sir; but I don't mean to be beaten for nothing. I don't dislike a fair fight—one at a time."

"I suppose 'tis the nature of boys," said the pedagogue with a sigh. "It never was my nature."

He had drawn the dictionary to the edge of the table, to bring the characters nearer the focus of the glasses, and, by a slight movement on his part, the book lost its balance and fell to the ground. Perth

picked it up, and placed it again before the schoolmaster.

"What engages your attention?" said he, seeing the eager glances with which Perth regarded the book.

"I was wondering what the character was, as it is not Greek," said the boy.

"How do you know it is not Greek?"

"Because I know the Greek character."

"Can you construe Greek?"

"Yes, sir, passably; but not in a manner to satisfy a scholar like yourself," he added modestly.

The old man took down a Homer, and opened at the description of Thersites, in the second book of the Iliad, and put Perth on in it.

The youth flushed, but remembering the maid's hints as to her master's deafness, he took care to speak softly and distinctly. He made one or two mistakes, for which his master stopped and corrected him; but Mr. Tracey was astonished at his proficiency.

"And are you a day-labourer only?"

"I have never been anything else; and what I know I have learnt when my work was over."

The old man's eyes were watering from the labour of looking out his words in the dictionary. "I wish you knew Arabic," said he; "but there is not a single creature who can help me in that."

"When would you wish me to come if my character suits, sir?"

"The present man leaves on Saturday next, but you may come when you please, and learn your work from him."

"If you please, sir," said Perth with a very red face, "to give me a few Arabic characters with their English meaning, I would learn them before I take to my work in your service regularly."

"I will give you some, but I fear it will be an unprofitable labour to you, and will never be useful to a man in your station of life."

"'In all labour there is profit,' sir, Solomon says."

The master smiled, and with a twinkle of his eyes said—

"Do not forget that when you are working for me. But observe: here I will write a few Arabic characters. When you can read and write these I will show you the vowel points and other syllabical signs, and then the numerical value of each letter in the alphabet; but we have not agreed about wages," said the old man with a troubled air.

"Am I to live in the house, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then if you would not mind letting me learn a little, I would take that instead of wages." And thus was the matter ultimately settled, Perth expending part of the money he had earned from the farmer in purchasing some clothes, to admit of his appearing more respectably dressed, and keeping part to pay for his washing. He consigned his hand-

kerchief to his new friend the housemaid, promising her a groat if she would wash it carefully from the stains left by the cold roasted chicken, and was not happy till he had watched the process, and seen it dried and ironed, and returned to him. Mary thought he must have stolen it, it was so fine; or picked it up, perhaps, quite by accident; but she wasn't going to peach on such a handsome youth—not she!

Perth's life was not otherwise than a happy one. His object was to obtain some knowledge of Arabic, both to aid his old master and for his own future benefit. When the boys had sought their homes, after school was over, Mr. Tracey and Perth had their hours of quiet enjoyment in the old man's study. Then there were half-holidays on Saturdays and whole holidays on Sundays—golden days of gentle rejoicing to the studious pair.

Mary reported Perth to be the quietest young man she had ever come across. To be sure he carried her Prayer-book to church on Sundays, but he had never even offered to kiss her; and the young gentlemen comed round her like flies to a honey-pot; she had enough to do to keep them off, and so she was sure she was not ill to look at; but the young man was so muddled up with book-larning that he "fared wholly stupid."

"If my father had been like Mr. Tracey," thought Perth, "how happily I might have lived at home!"

Perth had no intention of spending the whole of his life with his present master, notwithstanding the peacefulness of his present life. He must go out into the world; he was forging his weapons in this retreat. He must go forth and essay them shortly; but in the meantime the old man clung to him with the tenacity of liking felt by the aged when, after a long life passed with incongruous people, they find one mind which sympathises with their own; and Perth was too tender-hearted towards one who conveyed happiness to him in conveying instruction, to think of his master's desolation, when he should leave him, without a pang. In the meantime he found much to learn, and knew that his life was not wasted. Under his tuition at stolen hours little Craven rose in his Latin class too high to admit of his being bullied by the stupid giants of the school, and Perth gained so much strength from the wholesome and abundant food supplied by Mary and Mr. Tracey's cook, that a simple refusal to bring in spirits was sufficient when uttered by the well-knitted youth, who looked quite capable of retaliation should the argument of force be resorted to; besides which, Perth was always good-natured and accessible, and often helped lame scholastic dogs over difficult stiles, which pleased the dogs and saved trouble to their master. But we must leave him now and return to the Holmes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Hear the loud alarum bells,
Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror now their turbulency tells
In the startled ear of night!
How they scream out their affright!
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune;
In clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire;
Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
With a resolute endeavour,
Now—now to sit or never
By the side of the pale-faced moon."

The musicians had packed up their instruments and departed. The last weary servants had fallen asleep on their beds, most of them still dressed, so much had the fatigues of the past day and night overpowered them. The more educated inmates of the Holmes were dreaming on the subjects which had occupied their waking thoughts. Mr. Elliot again heard the carriages driving off in his night visions. Miss Elliot recalled in her sleeping memory the account of battles related to her by her warrior-partner. Lady Bab dreamed that she was proclaimed

queen of some wonderful island, and a salvo of artillery was fired to do her honour. Miss Bruce believed that she was Mrs. Elliot, and giving a rout in the London season, with the sound of incessant rat-tat-tats at the door. Leah dreamed that the end of the world was come, and the trump of the Almighty sounded to judgment.

In truth, the hot stillness that had fallen on the park at the Holmes, and the inky blackness of the clouds that covered more than half the horizon, were illuminated suddenly by lightning, which encircled the heavens with sheets of fire, and which might well have given Leah the idea of the universal judgment. The crash of thunder which followed immediately on this pale glare seemed like the rumbling of a volcano before its explosion. There was an interval of about five minutes, and the vivid flashes redoubled, and the thunder pealed its earthquake voice; and the sleepers started up, but overpowered with fatigue, it was only to congratulate themselves on their safe shelter, and then they turned to sleep again.

In a few moments Lady Barbara awoke with a feeling of suffocation, and a painful sensation of inhaling sulphur. She opened her tingling eyes, and saw that the room was dark with smoke; presently a sharp spiral flame ran up the curtain of her bed from the floor at the bed-post at her feet. She tried to scream "Fire! fire!" but only swallowed mouth-

fuls of smoke, without producing any sound that could be heard beyond her bed-chamber. Without waiting to dress, she ran over the hot floor to open the door, not thinking of Leah in the turret-room, and essayed to unlock it, but in her terror and confusion she hampered the fastenings; she pulled the bell quickly and furiously, and went on with repeated peals, in the hope that some one might come and break open the door. The church bell was now set tolling with those quick, sharp clangs which tell to the villagers that those in extremity by fire require their aid. Some labourers proceeding to their work had seen smoke issuing from the roof of the Holmes, and had called up the sexton to sound the alarm-bell.

Mr. Elliot, Rose, Miss Bruce, and Sir Edgar were sleeping in the opposite extremity of the building, and were unconscious of the danger that menaced them till the shouts of the people outside and the rattling of gravel thrown against their window awoke them to a sense of their danger. The first thought of Rose was for her father. She put on her slippers and dressing-gown, and ran to arouse Mr. Elliot, whom she found drawing on his stockings deliberately by the side of the bed.

"Oh, papa! come, be quick! The house is on fire! You will be burnt!"

"My child, where there is fire there is a great deal of smoke, and there is none here at present;

but a tremendous noise of foolish people shouting outside."

"Pray come out, papa! I think the fire is in the north wing. I can see smoke pouring out from the lower windows, and there is flame, too, occasionally. You must come somewhere where we can count out the family, and see they are all safe."

"Some one unchain Oscar," Mr. Elliot cried, and Rose ran off to set the favourite free, understanding her father's dread lest his kennel should ignite. As they ran down-stairs, the servants were tumbling over one another in their eagerness to escape.

"Stand by, you idiots!" said the master of the house. "Let us see that all lives are saved first, and then we must see to the plate, and furniture, and paintings."

They went out on the lawn, where Leah had formerly concealed herself, and tried to count the servants and guests; but the crowd of villagers attracted by the hope of being able to assist, or by the expectation of plunder, pressed through the gate of the iron railings, and made it difficult to distinguish in the early light who was present. Sir Edgar, who joined them dressed only in his slippers, shirt, and trousers, proposed that each of the family should pass through the iron gate and be counted by Mr. Elliot. Sir Edgar's eyes roamed eagerly, nay, wildly, over the crowd. He shouted—

"Let all escaped from the house pass through the gate to the west plantation."

They came, they passed, obedient to the order; two were missing—Lady Barbara and Leah. Sir Edgar uttered a sound between a cry and a groan, which was echoed by all the crowd, as with eager utterance, by which no intelligible information could be gathered, they pointed to the opposite end of the house from that in which were Mr. Elliot and Rose. Sir Edgar asked hoarsely what was wrong—what did they see? but could get no satisfactory answer from their idiotic stare and drooping under-jaws. He fought his way through them, for from where the party stood, hemmed in by the crowd, they could not see the north corner of the house. Mr. Elliot desired one of his grooms to turn all the horses loose in the park excepting one, which he was to saddle, and ride at once to Stoneham to fetch the engine. In the meantime, he had the leather buckets taken from the servants' hall, and placed men in line to the lake in the park to pass the water to the burning side of the house. That part of the crowd now nearest the north turret shouted, and the rest struggled to get thither to see what had occasioned the cry. At the window of Lady Barbara's bedroom appeared what was said to be the figure of Leah in her night-clothes; but the smoke by which she was enveloped made her recognition nearly impossible. In another instant it seemed to be Lady Barbara.

"Yes, 'tis she!" cried Sir Edgar. "'Tis her voice."

But he thought it was Leah.

Frightful entreaties for aid now were uttered through the broken aperture in the window, by which the air, rushing in, increased the progress of the flames.

"Oh, for the love of Heaven, get me a ladder!" cried Sir Edgar.

And three or four men in the crowd ran to the garden to fetch one.

"They may get the ladder, but they won't get me to go up," muttered Luke. "I care more for my bones than for that fine Jezebel. The ladder won't be no use, sir, when it comes, for it won't reach the window."

Sir Edgar rushed back to the house. He went carefully up to his bed-chamber to procure from a small bed in his room, intended for a servant, a light blanket, and then throwing it over his head, he went towards the burning portion of the house. There were three staircases, and the fire was crackling under the old oak stairs which led to Lady Barbara's room, and little jets of smoke eddied between the yawning, cracking, blackened planks.

Sir Edgar was brave. With all his follies and his vices, to treasure his own life when that of a woman was in danger would have given him a

never-ending contempt for himself, could he have faltered on his heroic career.

The staircase led to the ante-room before mentioned. He was beginning to be very dizzy now from the effect of the smoke; but he rushed tottering through the darkened atmosphere, and shook the door of the bedroom impatiently.

"Open! Open, for the love of Heaven! I can't stay—I shall choke! Open it quick!"

A voice—it was Leah's—cried—

"The lock is hampered. You must break it open."

"How can I? Such a strong oak door!"

His eyes were smarting—he could hardly breathe; but he flung the weight of his shoulder against the old oak panel, and with the impetus the part of the lock which receives the bolt gave way, and he staggered into the room. A slight form tottered into his arms, trying to say, in an unnatural, choked, hysterical voice, "My darling, you have saved me!" He threw his blanket over her, and rushed out, and down the stairs, tottering under his burden. It was time to do so. Even as he passed through the ante-room fire was bursting from parts of the floor. It flamed up now on one side of the grand staircase; he flew down, his feet scarcely resting on the scorching wood, with his precious burden in his arms, and carried her out at once on to the lawn.

"She has fainted; give her air!" he cried, as a cheer rose from the crowd—a cheer which drowned the groan that burst from his lips when Rose flung back the blanket and revealed the insensible form of Lady Barbara.

When Leah saw Lady Barbara clasped in the embrace of Sir Edgar, she no longer desired to live. He had come—he had hazarded his life to save her rival. He had not given a thought to Leah—Leah, to whom he had uttered such rapturous protestations of love only a few hours since. The poor girl looked into the ante-room through clouds of smoke, and saw the flames darting along the sides of the room. She hesitated to step on the burning floor with her naked feet. Sir Edgar's feet had been protected by slippers.

Then Leah heard the crash of the falling staircase, and knew there was no hope of escape that way. She went to the back-stairs, but on opening the small door she was driven back by the sulphurous smell and the stifling smoke. Those stairs also were on fire, and were shrouded in black darkness, excepting where little forks of flame lighted them. No escape that way for Leah. She persuaded herself that, now Sir Edgar had chosen between Lady Barbara and herself in this last awful hour of proof, she had no further wish to live; but the process of suffocation is agonising, and instinct drove her to the open window, past which

swept the breezes of morning—which, though fouled by the noxious vapour which was killing her, was yet more pure than that within the room. She leaned out and cried piteously, because hopelessly, for help.

A crowd of pale faces were looking up at her, gleaming ghastly in the morning sun. They were looking on to watch till the smoke and flame should suck her into the smouldering timbers. The women cried and sobbed, but there seemed no stir amongst the men to save her. Must she die uncared for? "Oh, father! father!" she shrieked from the window, "save me! save me!" And the passing breeze caught the sounds and carried them clearly to the senses of the crowd. There was a jostling amongst the people, and, breathless and pallid as a corpse, Caleb Preston pushed forward.

"A ladder! a ladder!" he cried, in a voice hoarse with agony.

Just then a ladder was brought by six men through the crowd. They placed it against the wall under the window, and Caleb prepared to mount it, entreating the men to steady it at the foot. He had risen half-way towards the window, when a shower of fiery pieces of wood and hot stones fell from the roof, striking the ladder and the men who had been holding it. Terrified, they let go their hold, and the ladder swayed on one side, coming down with great violence, and bringing with

it the unhappy father, who lay under it with one of his legs crushed. He writhed on the ground, and a strong arm dragged him away from his perilous position.

"I can't help hurting you, do what I will," said Dick Crozier. "I'll get a door took off, and some lads to carry you home."

"Leah! Leah!" cried the miserable father. "Look! she is hanging half out of the window! Will no one go up the ladder and bring her down?"

"No one can, Master Preston. We only put up the ladder to satisfy you. It won't reach the window. She must die, poor girl! and that's the truth of it."

"Men, men!" shouted Caleb. "I'll give all I have—all I have in the world—to any one who will save her—who will only just try—just try," he repeated. "Are you men? Can you stand quiet here, and see a poor girl roasted alive, and not try to save her? I can't stir—I am helpless. Oh! some one, who has not a heart of stone, do go up!"

And he writhed back to look where Leah hung insensible, partly in and partly out of the window.

"Poor thing! I hope she is stupid, and won't feel no more pain!" said a woman in the crowd.

"No more pain!" shouted Caleb. "Woman, did you ever burn your finger? and then talk of no

more pain when the whole body is writhing, when the eyeballs are dried up with the scorching fire, when every sense of feeling given by God to minister delight is a source of agony unutterable! Oh, do try—do! I'm but a poor man!" wept the miserable father; "but God, who sees all things, will repay you when all my poor possessions will seem worthless to you."

"'Tis not the vally of anything, Mr. Preston. You see, 'twouldn't be no use to a dead man to have your bits of goods, nor all the groceries in your shop neither; and we vally our lives, and so do our gals here, our old women, and all as we works for."

There was a heaving of the crowd, and a cry of "Make way!" and Sir Edgar forced himself through the dense mass.

"Put up that ladder again!" he cried.

"'Tis no use, sir; 'twon't reach."

"Put it up!" he cried; and, as he looked up, the flames burst out from the window near the one from which the insensible body of Leah was hanging, and threw a lurid glare over his white upturned face.

"Put it up *there*," he said, directing it near a pipe which ran down by the side of the window. "Now, will you steady it?" he cried, turning to Mr. Elliot and some gentlemen who had come up to offer assistance. "If it comes down this time she must die. The floor won't stand many minutes more."

They promised, and were not driven off by a shower of fire which fell on them.

Gyp, seeing his master going into danger where he could not follow him, whined dismally at the foot of the ladder, nor could be driven away, but continued to whine and to watch his master "like a Christian," the people said.

"He is gone to his death," said one gentleman, "and he will not be able to save that poor girl. If he gets up—and I don't see how he can even touch her, even if he stands on the top strand of the ladder —he cannot grasp her to bring her down in his arms. She is too far gone to give him any assistance."

Mr. Elliot, to whom this was addressed, made no answer. He was too eager in watching Sir Edgar ascend.

"How pluck comes out with gentle blood!" said another. "The prospect of gold would not tempt those chaw-bacons to hazard themselves, and Sir Edgar, young, rich, and well born, with every prospect of sixty years of happy life before him, throws it away to save a village maiden from death."

There was a solemn hush now in the people assembled, for Sir Edgar had reached with impatient steps the top of the ladder. He was in doubt as to the chance of being able to grasp the pipe which ran by the side of the house.

"If it be quite close and I cannot get my fingers

round it, I shall not be able to cling to it," he argued.

The pipe was of cast-iron. Luckily, though it was getting hot, it was not too hot to cling to. It was sufficiently clear of the wall to allow of Sir Edgar's closing his hands round it, excepting where it was affixed to it by iron bands. By these he dragged himself up. On these he rested his feet, and gaining the level of the window, he pushed Leah gently aside, and drawing himself up by the power of his hands on the ledge of the casement, he disappeared into the room, dragging Leah after him. A volume of smoke mixed with flame poured from the window, and a roar of horror burst from the assembled crowd.

Mr. Elliot turned away. "I hope Rose is not near enough to have seen that," he said. "It is too frightful!"

Rose was under some trees in the more distant part of the park, occupied in trying to keep Lady Barbara covered by the blanket, which in her hysterical paroxysms she flung off constantly.

"She will die of the cold," said Rose, who could not leave her till the recreant Bell stole up with a look of shame, and then Rose ran back to see what was doing at the house. She met the men carrying Caleb Preston towards his home.

"Where is Leah?" she cried.

He looked at her with a countenance in which mental anguish triumphed over bodily agony.

"Miss Elliot, I gave way to your entreaties. I trusted my darling for one night to your care, and this is my repayment. She is perishing within those burning walls, and I wish I were with her."

The last sentence was nearly inarticulate in the wail of anguish with which it was uttered.

Rose hung her head, and was silent. Silence is the only resource in the presence of an overwhelming calamity, as Job's friends well knew; and had they kept their silence still longer, the unhappy sufferer would have been less tormented.

The engines now came rattling up, and the hose played on the roof and into the windows of the ignited rooms. "There is no chance of saving life now," the firemen said, "but we can prevent the house from being burnt." The gentlemen and better class of tradesmen who had previously arrived turned out the village people, who, on the pretence of carrying goods to a place of safety, were filling their own cottages at Mr. Elliot's expense, with this comforting reflection, that other folks would take the things if they did not.

Lady Barbara was carried back to the house, for the safety of which the firemen said they would be answerable, now that the thunder-storm had gone over, and with it the dread of re-ignition. She was put to bed in a room on the east side of the house, and soon, weary of her weeping when Sir Edgar

was not present to wipe away her tears, she went comfortably to sleep.

When Sir Edgar gained the room he found it impossible to breathe in it. He stooped down and dragged Leah to the door of the turret-room, which was shut.

"If 'tis walled up we must die together," he said. "'Tis a terrible chance to trust to; but, Leah, my child, my own darling! did you think I had left you to die alone? If this chance fail, we will perish together."

The air was less stifling in the turret-room from the door having been closed. Sir Edgar laid Leah down on the bed, and seizing the poker, he tried the paper-wall all round.

"There used to be a door. They may have walled it up; if so, we must sit down and die without further effort."

Oh, joy! it sounded hollow. He drove the poker against it with savage eagerness—it went through; then he flung himself against it—it gave way; there were the stone steps up to the top of the tower. He took Leah in his arms, and ascending the steps, stood on the top of the tower in the sight of the assembled multitude, who burst into a succession of cheers, which seemed to vibrate through the old battlements. When there, though they were saved from immediate death, their ultimate safety did not seem more assured. The tower flanked the north

angle of the building, and stood above it at a considerable height. One side of the house abutting on the tower was burning. On the other side of the tower was a dead wall, low down, making the descent to it difficult for a man with a rope, but almost impossible for a feeble girl, exhausted and half insensible; and when reached, it would be necessary to walk along on its narrow ledge till the roof of the rest of the building could be reached, when, should they attain that point in safety, they might climb into one of the windows of that part of the house unattacked by fire. At present it was equally impossible to leave Leah or to try to remove her. He penetrated into the stifling turret-room once more, and dragged up the sheets and a shawl and a blanket wherewith to shield her from the keen morning breeze, which made itself felt through the hot vapours of the smouldering timbers. He wrapped her up and sat down by her side, supporting her head on his breast. They could not be seen in this position, and were protected from the clouds of smoke in some degree by the battlements. Here he murmured loving words, of which Leah partly caught the sense with her renascent intelligence, and which filled her with happiness as intense as her previous anguish had been terrible.

Sir Edgar was proud of himself for having saved both women. He had thought only of Leah, and had believed that he clasped her in his arms when

he had deposited Lady Barbara safely on the turf. He had known all the peril of scaling the wall and penetrating the burning room, and he had dared it rather than leave Leah a prey to the flames, and now he was enjoying probably the happiest moments of his life, though still menaced by the chances of a terrible death.

The engines had now, however, begun to play over the rooms at the side of the turret, and some of the not unwelcome showers reached, like the spray of a water-spout, on the pair. Sir Edgar turned Leah's face to catch the freshness of the shower. He loved her with an intensity of tenderness which arose from the sense of possession. He had saved her. She was his.

In the meantime, it occasioned much consideration how to get the two down. Should the fire be extinguished and the descent be free from pieces of ignited wood and loose stones, they might come down by the stone steps of the turret; but this could not be for some hours, and there was the danger that when the supporting transverse beams were charred the whole tower might fall, and bring with it those who rested on its summit.

Rose, so soon as the glad shouts of the populace told her of Leah's temporary safety, sent Dick Crozier to inform Mr. Preston that Leah was at that moment seemingly unhurt. It was something that she was alive, though Rose would not give

expectations that might not be realised. A doctor had been sent for from Stoneham to set Mr. Preston's leg, and reported that the fracture was a compound one, and that quiet was indispensable if fever were to be avoided.

As Sir Edgar was forgetting past and present peril in the contemplation of the lovely downcast face that rested on his breast, a portentous sinking in the leaden floor at one corner, followed by a sudden aperture, quickly increasing as the lead melted and ran down from the heat, told him that they must dare the dangers of the descent, or fall through the tower.

"Leah, we cannot remain here. The descent is dangerous, but 'tis our only chance of life."

He tore the sheets into strips, and tied them together as firmly as his strength could unite the knots, and fastening one end round the battlement next to the dead wall, he looked at Leah doubtfully.

"Leah, you must hold by this sheet, and let yourself down by the side of the tower." She turned deadly pale. "Stop, I will tie knots—two or three at different distances. Not too many, or the sheet will not reach. Look, it is not difficult—not very;" and he let himself down, and clambered up again.

"I cannot walk on that narrow ledge, Edgar; my head would reel, and I should fall over and be dashed to pieces."

"Then I will go down again, and receive you in

my arms before you touch the wall. It will be difficult to turn myself with your weight on so narrow a ledge, but, by the aid of the wall, I may manage it. It would be safer for you to walk if you have strength. But no, I forgot, you cannot walk."

Sir Edgar remembered her naked feet, and knew that the wall was covered by hot cinders and burning bits of wood, on which he could step without damaging his slippers, while the sudden pain produced on Leah's unprotected feet would probably occasion her to stumble and fall over.

"Throw me down your shawl first, that I may wrap you in it. And now, Leah, remember that my life as well as your own depends on your being perfectly still. The least movement on your part, the slightest cry from you, would probably, by startling me, occasion me to lose my balance, and we should be precipitated to certain death."

Leah obeyed, and threw down a grey woollen shawl, in which she had wrapped herself on the previous evening, when she had walked across the park with her father to the Holmes. Then, with a white face and trembling hands, she began to let herself down by the sheet. She fancied that if the broad earth had been beneath her, she should not have minded so much, but the thought that a wall only a brick and a half thick was to receive her if she fell, made her heart palpitate with terror. She moved one hand below the other on the knotted

sheet, clinging to the lower knots by her feet, whilst Sir Edgar steadied the end of the substitute for a ladder. At length she felt herself grasped by a pair of strong arms, shielded by a shawl, and gave a little sob of relief.

"Now, remember, everything depends on presence of mind. Be still."

He staggered a moment under her weight in turning himself on the narrow coping, and fell back against the tower. Then he recovered himself, and walked on. Some light combustible substance was borne up by the eddying breeze, and fell in a shower over them. Sir Edgar was blinded for the moment, and stopped. He could not put his hands up to his face, to remove the flake of fire which singed his eyelashes, and gave him the horrible dread that he was struck with permanent blindness. "Blind or not," he thought, "I must go on;" and he felt along with his feet before he dared trust his outward steps. As the fiery rain had descended on them, he had felt a sudden quiver in the form he was clasping, but she had uttered no sound.

"Leah!" he said, "are we far from the wall of the house? I cannot open my eyes."

"We shall reach it in a moment," she said, in a voice which she could hardly prevent from going into a shriek.

Sir Edgar struggled on, and touched the wall with his foot and knee.

"Now we shall be safe," he said.

"The window is just above; if you lift me a little I can climb in," said Leah; and he lifted her up till she could reach the window-sill, and got in safely.

"Throw me one end of the shawl," said he, "and fasten the other to the bed-post."

"The shawl is burnt full of holes, and will not hold your weight safely. I will give you a sheet from the bed;" and she fastened it, whilst Sir Edgar cleared his eyelids from the hot dust that scorched them, and, seizing the welcome stay which she lowered to him, he stood beside her in safety.

"Will you go and tell them we are safe? My poor father!"

"Yes, I will go; but remember, in any future time when they may strive to separate us, Leah, that I would have poured out my blood like water to have saved you; and I did save you!"

He clasped her for an instant to his breast, and then left her to seek for Miss Elliot; whom, when he had discovered, he entreated to go to Leah, whilst he proceeded to his own room, which he had left on hearing the alarm of fire, and luckily found undisturbed, as it was at the opposite extremity of the building.

Rose went at once to Leah, who was trying to relieve the burning sensation on her shoulder, on which a piece of lighted wood had fallen as she

came along in Sir Edgar's arms; but, though her frame had quivered with the pain, she had expressed none by voice or voluntary movement. It had smouldered on the old grey shawl, without flaming up. Had it done so, the destruction of both must have been certain. Rose kindly bathed the burn, and procured clothes for her *protégée*, and then had the painful task of telling her of Mr. Preston's accident. Leah, on hearing it, was impatient to return home, and forgot even for the moment the over-brimming tenderness which filled her heart at the recollection of her lover.

"May I go at once?" said Leah. "Oh, Miss Elliot, what can I do about your clothes?"

"You are quite welcome to keep them," Rose said. "It would be hard on you to suffer loss from your wish to oblige us."

Various contradictory reports had penetrated to the sick bed of Caleb Preston, as he lay helpless from his fractured leg. The account conveyed by Miss Elliot that Leah had been seen on the top of the tower in safety had been followed by the information that there was no chance of her getting down, nor the young gentleman either. Then came the intelligence that the top flooring was lead, and that it was melting and running down in streams; consequently, that though Sir Edgar and Leah, who were invisible to the crowd below, might still be clinging to the interior of the battle-

ments, there was no way by which they could escape, as no ladder could reach them, and they could not retain their hold long together. Caleb could not but listen, though every word was an agony. He writhed on his bed, unable to move to obtain further information.

A slender girl pushed through these birds of ill-omen who lingered by the bed, and Leah threw herself on her father's pillow, sobbing in the extremity of a joy so great as to become in expression painful.

"Oh, father, father! I am come back to you safe. I will nurse you till you are well. You will soon be well now I am come;" and Caleb blessed God with uplifted hands and eyes, and fancied that no further grief could ever wipe out the memory of this great joy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Away, thou trifler! Love, I love thee not;
I care not for thee, Kate."

SHAKSPEARE.

At the Holmes, Mr. Elliot was busy in estimating the extent of his losses, and in calculating how far the insurances would cover them. There were those which no insurances would compensate for. Time only could repair trampled flowers, broken shrubs, cut-up turf, stolen property. However, having done all that prudence required in the emergency, he was content to shut himself up again in his room, disturbed by the recollection that Miss Bruce had taken off her petticoat to wrap round his shoulders, and tied her lace pocket-handkerchief over his head, when he first emerged from the house in his night-clothes—a proceeding which filled him with rage and disgust, for he was a man most nice in his notions of cleanliness; and, though he tore off the obtruded garments in a hurry, which was a reflection on his politeness, he could not get over the thought of the pollution he had received. And he feared to return to the house to perform ablutions, where, though water unpleasantly hot might be superabundant, the cold

fluid was all otherwise engaged in extinguishing the fire.

He recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to tell Miss Bruce that he could not selfishly deprive her of her clothing when it was doubtful whether any other could be obtained, and that her being invalided on his account he should consider a calamity more distressing to his feelings than any damage done by the fire. So Miss Bruce was comforted; for, though an adept in dissimulation herself, she never was prepared for it in others.

Rose was quite exhausted by the fatigue of the last twenty-four hours, and retired to her room to sleep some part of it away.

Beautiful and soothing sleep came, too, to relieve the perplexed mind of Sir Edgar, and his exhausted body. He wooed her influence with a wet rag over his burnt eyelid.

"I should not wonder if there should be a scar there always," he thought; and he did not like the idea of a puckered bit of flesh just in the little resting-place made by the fulness of the cheek, where it supports the lower eyelid.

Now any woman who looked at him, if the scar remained, would see him deformed by the blemish, and she would know nothing of the gallant act in which it was received; but he dropped off to sleep with the floating thought that he was going to marry Leah, who stood by his side in virgin white,

with a lace veil which rendered her undistinguishable. Mr. Preston was the officiating priest, who insisted on marrying them according to the rites of the Scotch Kirk. The ceremony was concluded, but as he turned to kiss his bride, a livid corpse, which he recognised to be Lady Barbara, caught him in her grasp, and pressed her loathsome blue lips upon his warm ones. He started up awakened by the horror of the dream, and found that the wet rag had fallen down so as to cover his mouth and nose, and was pressed against the former by the corner of the pillow that supported his head. He confounded it, and throwing it off, slept for some hours peacefully.

Probably the awaking hours of both Leah and Sir Edgar were troubled with disagreeable recollections. Sir Edgar awoke to the fact that, though he had saved a couple of lives, yet he had committed himself in a disgraceful manner in his conversation with both females; and though Lady Barbara was probably quite content with the aspect of affairs, and was wrapped by her own self-esteem in so warm a cloak that it was impenetrable to any cold blast of distrust, Leah might probably judge him unfavourably when she remembered the offer of marriage, if not expressed in formal words, yet so constantly referred to and confirmed by Sir Edgar to Lady Barbara. What could she think of him, when, with the sweet purity of her kisses lingering on his

lips, his caresses had been given to those of her rival? These were uncomfortable reflections, and the only consolation he had was in the thought that, as Lady Barbara had never before cared to accept him, and had so evidently avoided him for the companionship of Sir John Moore only a few hours previously, she would not hold him to any expressions which might be construed into idle gallantry, or serious earnest, as she chose to receive them.

The party did not reassemble till dinner-time, when Sir Edgar was rather relieved to find that Lady Barbara had taken cold, and was too much indisposed to leave her room. Relieved for the moment from a great embarrassment, and with the good spirits and keen appetite of twenty years, Sir Edgar enjoyed his dinner and drank off his champagne; he was polite to Miss Elliot and deferential to Mr. Elliot, who complimented him warmly, as did Rose, on the self-devotion which he had shown in rescuing two lives.

"I am so very grateful to you for saving the life of Leah Preston," said Miss Elliot; and her honest eyes filled with fervent tears as she spoke. "The reproaches of her poor father pierced my heart. His entreaties to some one to mount the ladder from which he had fallen were agonising."

"I did not hear him speak," said Sir Edgar. "I mounted as soon as the ladder was replaced against the wall."

The conversation then turned to the amount of damage done, and as to whether the horses which had been turned loose in the park had caught cold from standing about in the raw morning air. And whilst Sir Edgar was mixing just the desirable quantity of cream with his crushed strawberries, his valet came with a message, sent through Bell from Lady Barbara, to Sir Edgar, requiring to see him in the ante-chamber of her bed-room.

Sir Edgar's cheeks had not lost the blooming tint of youth, ordinarily speaking, but they became colourless at this summons. He rose reluctantly, saying to Rose, "Will you not come up also?" but, with a mischievous twinkle of her eyelids, she said, sitting still, and beginning to help herself to some cherries, that she should only be in the way in such an interview, and Sir Edgar went alone.

"Really, a dog with his tail between his legs is an inelegant comparison to a young baronet, Rose," said Mr. Elliot, "but that youth went with more alacrity up the ladder which took him to what was a fearful chance of death, than he is now going to the boudoir of a fair lady."

"Perhaps," said Rose, smiling, "he feels that the effort is 'for life' in both cases."

"Do you mean to say that, ignoring your engagement, he is addressing himself to Lady Barbara?"

"I meant to have told you, my dear father, that

I gave him his dismissal some days since, as I saw much that I disliked in his manner to Miss Bruce, even before Lady Barbara."

"A young scoundrel!" Mr. Elliot muttered, who resented the deficiency of proper attention to his daughter, and the superabundance exhibited to Miss Bruce.

"Since Lady Barbara came, it is evident that she considers him an acknowledged lover," Rose continued.

"He ought to have left the house as soon as you dismissed him," said the irritated father.

"Oh no, papa! I begged him to stay for the *fête;* and what could we have done without him?"

"The *fête* being over, I suppose he and Lady Bab will both take their departure. I imagine that you are heart-whole, Rose, by your seeming so cheerful."

"Oh yes, papa! I never could have loved him well enough to marry him, though he has fine qualities, and I never was so near loving him as I was last night," said Rose simply and candidly, and with such transparent kindliness, that her father, who had known what love was in his youth, saw that she bestowed none on Sir Edgar, and was satisfied.

When that perplexed young man went up to the room now appropriated to Lady Barbara, he found her reclining on a sofa in the dressing-room, taste-

fully attired in a white robe trimmed with pink ribbons. She was rendered as attractive as pearl-powder of a soft yellow tint, and a suspicion of rouge, could make her; not too much, for it was her part to play the sick and sentimental beauty, exhausted by the perils from which her lover had rescued her.

Lady Barbara had the greatest possible admiration for, and love of, herself, and with the shuddering horror with which she recalled the terrible death from which Sir Edgar had saved her, came the feeling nearest to love she had ever experienced in her cold selfish life. She had had a weakness for the handsome face of the youth before, but now she honestly loved him. She never doubted his delight when she should declare her intention of yielding to his fervent prayers for her hand. Indeed, she had had no reason to doubt the reality of a devotion put forward so frequently and in tropes so moving, even during the night previous to that act of gallantry on his part, which seemed to exalt her by the heroism exhibited by her lover.

Her eyes darted a thousand loving welcomes as he appeared at the door; and as after closing it he leaned against it, as if doubtful whether he might come further into the room—"Edgar!" she murmured, and extended a small thin hand, not very white, but of a soft yellow tint.

Edgar came forward, and took it with somewhat

less than a lover's warmth, for the hand was unlike the rounded, dimpled, youthful fingers of Leah. She continued to court the grasp of his by leaving hers in his palm, and he was much perplexed what to do with it; but suddenly pretending to fear the fresh evening air from an open window, he went forward, saying, "I cannot allow you to risk the increase of your cold by such imprudence;" he laid the clinging hand softly on the sofa; and having arranged the curtains and closed the window, he sat down at some little distance from her.

Though she was provoked by what she believed to be his bashfulness, she had not even a passing suspicion that he was not devoted to her.

"How I have longed to see you again, to pour out all the gratitude I feel for the preservation of my life! Such a dreadful death it would have been! When I heard your voice outside the door I knew you had come to rescue me, but I was not sure that you would succeed till I felt myself locked in your arms. Then I knew our fates were linked together, in life and till death. Oh, Edgar! what a guardian angel you have been to me!"

"Dear Lady Barbara, you greatly overrate any small service I have rendered you. A man must be less than human who could know that a woman was perishing, and not hazard his life to attempt to save her. Pray do not put me to shame by over-estimating an act which is repeated probably by professional

firemen twice a week during the winter in the metropolis."

"You are so modest, Edgar," said the lady, looking down in the hope that he was admiring the length of her dark eyelashes.

There was a pause.

"No lives were lost, I trust? How did that work-girl manage to get down?" Lady Barbara had been on dignified terms with Bell since her return, and Bell had punished her by withholding all the chit-chat of the place.

"She managed to escape, and I have not heard of any lives lost," Sir Edgar returned hastily.

"I suppose she followed us down-stairs," mused Lady Barbara; and Sir Edgar was again silent. He did not feel capable, when Lady Barbara had given him such superlative commendation for the perils he had dared in saving her, of confessing that he had encountered greater risks for the sake of "that work-girl."

"He is very stupid," thought the lady, "this afternoon. Englishmen are worth nothing if they are disturbed at their wine after dinner. This young man's thoughts are lingering over the yet untasted port."

"I fear I summoned you before you were quite prepared to leave the table, Sir Edgar."

Of course the gentleman protested that, under all circumstances, he must ever be happy to comply

with any mandate which brought him to her presence.

"I would not have sent for you," said the lady, with a little nervous kick of her satin slipper where it peeped out from its surrounding draperies, "but that I wished to give you a little token of remembrance of this fifteenth day of June, which I believe you will value," and Lady Barbara took from its case a gold locket, set round with magnificent brilliants, containing her hair on one side and a small miniature of herself on the other.

Lady Barbara had one quality in common with Mrs. Gilpin—

> "Though on pleasure she was bent,
> She had a frugal mind."

She had had various phases of the simulation of the tender passion before, and the locket was what might be considered a stage-property used by many individuals, but always to be collected with care when the play was over, to be locked up for further use. As her wealth was great, her gifts were costly, and on every disruption of her attachments she desired that they might be returned. She did not always remember to be equally just, because of what use could be a lady's ring, or bracelet, or pair of earrings to a gentleman? It would only encumber him, or tempt him to make presents to a class of persons who ought not to have gifts, and really she

LIBRARY

would not fancy anything which she had worn going into meaner hands.

Sir Edgar saw the glittering of the diamonds in the hands of the lady, as the costly bauble hung by its delicately-wrought chain on her slender fingers, and was beginning a deprecatory speech, when Lady Barbara said, in a tone of authority, "Come here. Kneel down."

He came, he knelt, and she passed the chain round his neck, being longer than was absolutely necessary in fastening the snap, during which time her face was brought into close proximity with that of Sir Edgar. The presence of her arms on his shoulders, the lingering of her fingers round his neck, and the seeming reality of feeling of one usually so artificial, were too much for Sir Edgar's resolution of constancy to Leah. He clasped her passionately to his breast, and kissed her lips with a fervour which seemed to tell of love unspeakable; yet an instant after he recoiled under the pang of memory that shot through his heart in the recollection of the pure-minded girl he had wronged by his vacillation.

"You will always wear it for my sake," whispered Lady Barbara.

Sir Edgar made a desperate effort to get rid of what he felt to be like a shilling received by an unfortunate recruit as earnest-money for future service.

"My dear Lady Barbara——"

"Call me Bab," said she, drawing his head down on her breast with tender violence.

"My dear Lady Bab, then."

"No; Bab."

He did not notice the second interruption, but went on—

"Do not present me with so costly a gift. I want none to remind me of the grandest day of my life—the only period of time I can remember in which I felt not utterly ashamed of broken purpose and wasted life."

"Keep it, my Edgar," said the lady, whilst tenderness softened into melody a voice usually as strident as that of a peacock. "Keep it. In a short time our property and interests will be identical;" and again the caressing arms were pressed round Sir Edgar's neck.

A footstep now approached the door, and Sir Edgar sprang to his feet. A soft tap was heard, and Bell inquired if her ladyship would take tea or coffee. Lady Barbara wished Bell drowned in a caldron of weak tea for the interruption, whilst the lady's-maid argued thus:—

"I don't see why she should be shut up any longer with her young man. I'm sure she made fuss enough at my staying down to dance with mine."

But Sir Edgar blessed Bell in his heart, and determined to give her a new ribbon at the first

opportunity; and, saying that he would send up coffee, he bowed himself out of the room, and sought the protection of Rose Elliot and her father, to say nothing of that of Miss Bruce, with whom Mr. Elliot was playing chess. Rose was knitting at a distant table. She did not suspect the double play of Miss Bruce, to lose a game and win it by the same stratagem. Rose did not know the moves of either game, and she thought not of her father after she had seen that he had the proper number of lumps of sugar in his coffee, and was not sitting in the draught of the open glass door. Her thoughts were of the past, and were discursive. She wondered if she should ever see that beautiful face and fine form again, or was the remembrance to fade in the mist which absence intensifies in every succeeding month, till the image becomes ghostly in the mind? She would give him the purse she was making, if she should ever have the opportunity; and then, feeling a little nervous at the thought, she twitched the silk, and it went into a knot, which reminded her of the knotted sheet by which Sir Edgar and Leah had let themselves down from the tower, and she speculated as to how Sir Edgar could have united the strips in knots of sufficient tenacity to support his weight, or Leah's, without giving way. The thicker the strip the more difficult the attaching it, she argued, and a thin strip would not have held together. Whilst she thus speculated, and deter-

mined that every room should be provided with coils of rope in future, she heard a step behind her, and turning her head, she saw Sir Edgar standing with a flushed and troubled look at the back of her chair.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"All my past life is mine no more,
The flying hours are gone,
Whose images are kept in store
By memory alone.
Whatever is to come, is not:
How can it then be mine?
The present moment's all my lot,
And that, as fast as it is got,
Phillis, is wholly thine.
Then talk not of inconstancy,
False hearts and broken vows:
If I by miracle can be,
This livelong minute true to thee,
'Tis all that Heaven allows."

ROCHESTER.

SIR EDGAR tried to smile, and said—

"I am happy in finding you disengaged, madam. I come to you as a criminal, who, flying from his pursuers, cries 'Sanctuary!' and is left in peace."

Rose got up and set aside her work, and stepped into the moonlight on the turf of the crushed, misused lawn, and Sir Edgar, after going for his hat—for that careful youth was unwilling to spoil his appearance by the swollen nose and weeping eyes occasioned by a cold in his head—followed her. She thought he had some small trouble to confide

to her, and his self-devotion evinced that morning had made her glad to be of any service to him.

"Ah! Miss Elliot—may I say Rose?—what an extraordinary thing it is that with you I feel perfectly at ease, now our engagement is broken off! And how strange it is that you are the only lady I ever met who is not determined to marry me!"

"Had I known you were going to be so very conceited," said Rose, laughing, "I should scarcely have come out to walk with you in the moonlight; but if Sir Edgar is about to confess his sins—for in love, as in a quarrel, there must be two in the wrong, papa says—we had better move further from the house."

Sir Edgar did not reply, except by leading the way to a secluded path where the gravel was less hazardous, he considered, to the soles of his shoes, than the damp-exuding turf. He was half inclined to confide all his perplexities to Rose; but he hesitated, first, from motives of delicacy towards Leah and Lady Barbara; then he began to consider how he could shape his confession; but the whole affair seemed impossible to re-word. In the first place, he would have had to tell Rose that, having been betrothed to her, he had made an offer to Lady Bab, and been refused. It happened that this would have been no news to Rose, but of this Sir Edgar was not aware. Then how could he speak of what

had been his designs on Leah to a girl of such purity of thought as her with whom he stood in the moonlight? It was true that since he had become acquainted with Leah he had more than half determined to marry her; but how mention that which Rose, with her feelings about high birth, would consider probably a foolish act, as it certainly would be an eccentric one; and how own that, with love-tones to Leah still trembling on his lips, he had made such protestations to Lady Barbara as she had a right to interpret as a renewal of his offer to wed her?

Sir Edgar took a middle course, as most men do who are infirm of purpose. He would tell Rose half; confess half his sins. He was scarcely aware what his purpose was in this confidence. Probably he had none, and only wanted the relief of talking to some one who would, he trusted, judge him leniently.

"You have been so very good to me——" and he paused.

"In not wishing to marry you?" said Rose.

"Ah! no. Had I ever discovered the slightest relenting, the shadow of preference for me in your manner, you would have seen me at your feet."

Rose took advantage of the smooth bark of a beech tree, and leaning against it, laughed so quietly that Sir Edgar began to fear she was

choking with emotion, and that unwittingly he had made another conquest. A suspicion that this was his impression amused her fancy so much, that the laughter rang out in the soft moonlight with a heartiness that would have distressed Lord Chesterfield.

"Enough of that, Sir Edgar. Fancy it all said," said Rose, wiping her eyes. "I was only laughing at the inveterate tone of coquetry which makes you offer false coin even to me, who know it to be false."

"I wish every woman knew me as well as yourself," he replied sadly. "You have no vanity, with every reason to be vain. Other women are so confoundedly conceited, that they believe the most incredible stories of their attractions. I made an offer to Lady Barbara two years ago——"

"Ahem!" said Rose. "You were my property then."

"Would I were now!" said Sir Edgar, "for I know you would not retain me five minutes; but her ladyship's grasp is more tenacious."

"Did she accept you?"

"No; she refused me."

"Then the matter was done with?"

"No," said Sir Edgar slowly. "I wish it had been; but, seeing her again, I could not help saying a few sweet things, and implying many more, and now she takes them all to be gospel

in truth and sincerity—expects to be married forthwith."

"And have you repented this determination on Lady Barbara's part?"

"Of course I do. I want several months of being of age, and Lady Bab has the slightest possible threatening of a cross on her brow, which will increase into two wrinkles before another year is over. Oh, Rose! could you not declare that we are engaged, and that you will not give me up?"

"I would do anything in reason to oblige you, cousin, as Slender says; but really—consider, my dear Sir Edgar, in what an undignified position you place me, should I say that I retain an unwilling captive, to please you. As you are not of age, I dare say that a word in season spoken to your guardian would be sufficient to make him object to your *immediate* marriage with Lady Barbara; but you had better consider the advantage of the connection before you decide on such a step. She is thought by those who admire her to be beautiful. She is enormously rich, and is very accomplished. As your wealth, which is enough to tempt a poor girl, would be no temptation to Lady Barbara, it is probable that she is really attached to you; and where, again, will you find such a combination of advantages united in one person? If you put off the marriage till you are of age, she will

probably decline to wait; or, if she consent, she may change her mind before the expiration of eight months."

"You speak like a Solon in petticoats," said Sir Edgar. "I will go to London in a day or two, to see my guardian on the subject. Meanwhile, I will try to get the lady to keep silence as to her intentions. It is a pity that marriages about to take place should ever be mentioned before the wedding-day. So many fall to pieces, like snowballs, before warm discussions as to settlements."

"That is only when there is some cold element in them," replied Miss Elliot, smiling, as they passed silently back to the window. Sir Edgar stepped forward to put aside a branch of sweet-brier, which obstructed Miss Elliot's path.

"Sweet cousin," said he, drawing back from the window, and preventing her advance to it, "considering that I have called you a sage in wisdom, I think you might be permitted to go alone in the future, without a guide to the right path. Get rid of that young woman who is playing chess with your father, unless, indeed, you wish for a companion in the shape of a mother-in-law during the rest of your unmarried life."

Rose started and turned pale, and made no answer. Miss Bruce was talking very earnestly to Mr. Elliot over the chess-board, and as he was leaning his arm on the table, and his head on his

hand, her face got into closer proximity with his than Rose approved of.

She took no notice in reply, and their return to the drawing-room was the signal for the breaking up of the party for the night.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Trust not a man—we are by nature false,
Dissembling, subtle, cruel, and inconstant.
When a man talks of love, with caution trust him;
But if he swears, he'll certainly deceive thee."

OTWAY.

SIR EDGAR could not remain quiet in his room. His restless steps pacing up and down his bed-chamber, he feared, would disturb the other inmates of the Holmes. When all the sounds of life had died away he went down softly and undid the fastenings of one of the windows in the drawing-room, and stepped out. He wanted a large space for his wanderings. He fancied that he could think out his plans more distinctly when in the soft night air. The full moon looked down on the quiet earth from a veil of golden haze, and gave deeper shadows to the noble avenue of spreading beeches, the extremities of whose branches caught a quivering of soft light on leaves whose movements were almost imperceptible. All other illumination was absent. The shadows fell in grand masses. In the dancing sunshine a tree is cut up into many beautiful forms, which attract and distract the eye. In moonlight

the same scene becomes solemn as the thought of death, gathering over to damp and conceal the small pleasures and petty distractions of existence. Nature gives a lesson to the attentive ear and the penetrating eye; but her influences, to be effectual, must fall on the mind when it is tranquil. The perturbed breast reflects none but images broken and distorted.

Sir Edgar walked about hurriedly, till the deer, crouched in the shadow of the avenue, stood up prepared to bound away, should the intruder come too near. They had been driven to distant patches of fern when riot had held its court at the Holmes, but had returned together to hold consultations on the affairs of deerdom—the bucks in one part of the park, and the does in another, like ladies and gentlemen after dinner. Sir Edgar did not care for their discomfort, being much occupied by his own, but he turned accidentally into another direction, and they were left at peace.

Every argument used by Rose as a reason why he should marry Lady Barbara determined him more against the alliance. He looked forward through a vista of long years, when he should be tied to a woman he could not respect, who was already his senior by nearly ten years, and would be faded before he arrived at manhood's meridian; but, as he created to himself this picture, his memory took a spiteful pleasure in recalling

to him every expression of devotion he had uttered to her within the last week. "I declare," he said, "I will plead infancy as regards this dreadful debt of honour. I will not be bound by protestations made before I am at years of discretion. Why was I created with such a terrible taint of insincerity and simulation in my character, that I am for ever getting into scrapes? And when I confess to my guardian all this, how can I excuse myself in the eyes of a shrewd man of the world? I must go up and see Mr. East, and tell him some of my perplexities. I really did not mean to say half that I have said, nor to do more than half that I did," he continued, laughing to himself. "It was grand in me to save both those women, but I did not mean to save more than one. Really!" and he laughed again, "it would have relieved me from half my perplexities had I contented myself with saving one." Then he stopped for a few moments and leaned against a tree, looking back on that portion of the blackened building which showed ragged, and grim, and dilapidated against the moonlit sky. "Had Leah been in my arms on the turf, and Lady Bab been suffocating in the burning chamber, should I have fetched her out at the risk of my own life? No, certainly not. Then I certainly should be doing a great injustice to Lady Barbara's merits did I marry her, when I love another woman better. But, hang it! there is something in being a gentleman. There is something in

honourable feeling. I gave the lady the impression that I loved her, and I have accepted and returned her caresses. What a miserable sinner I am! Oh, Leah! with what contempt you would regard me, did you know all! Yet she does know part. She heard all I said that evening. Lady Barbara permitted her to listen. It was very indelicate of that woman—very dishonourable. Leah would never have done it, though she is but a grocer's daughter—a grocer's daughter—and a grocer on a very small scale too. Never mind," said the flippant youth; "there is but a very small amount of grocery in that little shop, so the disgrace is like that apologised for by the young lady—'only a little one.'"

After some further cogitation, he determined to go and look at the outside of the little grocer's shop that held Leah. It was not very far across the park. What he meant to do when he got there he knew not. He would look up at the window. Perhaps she might be awake, and speak to him. "Oh, Leah! if you were but nobly born, how gladly would I marry you!" Then he remembered his entanglement with Lady Barbara.

"Upon my word," he said, "I don't see how 'tis to be got out of, unless I persuade Sir John Moore to come back and cut me out; and that would be a failure; for did he return, I suspect his devotion would be paid to that charming girl, Rose. What a doubly-dyed idiot I have been!"

The little grocer's shop looked sufficiently romantic in the moonlight. There was no light in the lower windows, but the casements were fastened open, and a light burning in one of the upper casements. Sir Edgar leaned over the pales and watched. He conjectured that the light was in Mr. Preston's room. Presently the village clock struck two. Sir Edgar had no idea that it was so late. The solemn sound had scarcely ceased to vibrate on the stillness, when Sir Edgar saw an old woman stealing in through an open door, with a face as wrinkled as one of Mieris' paintings of age, which showed the more from the light of the candle, for, by shielding it with her hand, she concentrated the illumination on her face. Leah then became visible, as she rose, with her finger on her lips, to impose silence, pointing to her sleeping father, and moving softly out of the room. Evidently the night-watch had been divided, and Leah's half having been accomplished, she was probably going to rest. The irresistible desire to speak to her made Sir Edgar more reckless than he ought to have been, and he sprang over the pales into the garden. Now old Bobtail, during the eleven years of his past life, had always been watching for imaginary housebreakers, but had never found any one who was willing to bring credit on him by testing his fidelity. In his drowsy thoughts he was as much puzzled by a question of identity as the most conscientious judge. Certainly the time of

night was suspicious, but had he not heard that step, which now grated over the paved path alone, fall in loving accord with those of his darling mistress? The question was too puzzling for his misty brain to decide; for dogs, like two-legged animals, like their proper amount of sleep, and Bobtail had been kept up by having to bark at the late visit of the doctor, who had been to see the state of Mr. Preston the last thing. So he made a sleepy protest by one weary yap, which might not commit him to having made a mistake, nor convict him of neglect of duty, should the intruder prove to be unwelcome. The sound, however, brought Leah to the window; if it were repeated, the sleep on which Mr. Scars insisted so much, as a necessity for her father's well-doing, might be disturbed and broken. She leaned out and saw Sir Edgar, who made signs to her to come down. She hesitated a moment, and then descended, and opening the door softly, walked with him out into the moonlight.

Leah's meditations during her silent watch by Mr. Preston's bed had not been of a happy character. When the first glow of thankfulness for her rescued life had subsided, she remembered the words addressed to Lady Barbara, which had so chilled her heart, in the bed-chamber of that lady on the past eventful night. She remembered the kiss which, though she had not witnessed it, she was certain had been received, and then she thought

of the violated purity of her own lips. If the woman who receives the pressure of her lover's lips could guess where they had last lingered, how chary she would be of her caresses! Leah thought with a pang of those she had responded to, in the first ebullition of her gratitude to the lover who had risked his life so nobly to save hers, and when her wavering senses had hardly recovered their equilibrium. She must be more careful in future, she determined; yet when he drew her hand within his arm, and conducted her towards the forest seat, she felt, in the sense of trust and love, pleasure the most intense. When they had gone sufficiently far from the house not to be overheard, Leah, leaning her head against her lover's arm, burst into reproaches, woman-like.

"Oh, Sir Edgar! why did you save me from that suffocating room? I had rather have died, and made an end of it. How can I live, knowing that you love that great lady whom you saved first? You saved her because you loved her; you only pitied me; and—oh dear!—is it noble, is it generous to make a poor girl like me love you, and then to kiss *her?*"

Sir Edgar had stooped his head over Leah's face to ask for forgiveness, and for the proof of it, but Leah released herself, and turned away. Sir Edgar, young as he was, had been an adept in the science of love. He made no effort to retain his hold, and

only said, "You will be sorry, Leah, for this unkindness. To-morrow I go away, and you may never see me again."

She reeled and staggered at the announcement of this great calamity, which, like a strong wind over a bed of reeds, bowed her to the earth. He supported her on in silence till they reached the forest retreat, where he placed her in her accustomed nook, and seated himself by her side in silence. She spoke first.

"Why must you go? Oh, Sir Edgar! why were you ever so nice to me—so kind and good? How can I help loving you? You are so beautiful and grand," she added simply.

"I do not go from choice, Leah; I am constrained to go."

"Are you going with Lady Barbara?" she said jealously.

"No, my child."

"Why must you go?"

"My dear, you are constrained to watch by your father's sick bed by duty—cannot you fancy that I may have duties to perform also?"

"You have no father nor mother," said Leah, sobbing.

"No, but I have a guardian, and I want to consult him."

"Is he a good man?"

Sir Edgar did not answer directly. It seemed so

strange an epithet to apply to the shrewd, cold, worldly-wise lawyer who had been intrusted with the guardianship of Sir Edgar and of his property. Yet he was strictly honest, and even honourable in everything connected with money, would not tell an untruth unless closely pressed and driven into a corner, and in a bargain would not have taken an unfair advantage of a poor man, though he might have left a brother lawyer to look out for the interests of his client, whilst he pressed him hard for the advantage of his own.

Sir Edgar knew the idea Leah connected with the word "good," and her interpretation of it made him hesitate.

Sir Edgar knew also that Mr. East, who was nicknamed North-east, from his cold heart and cutting speech, if spoken to as to his love for Leah, would have pooh-poohed it, as something too absurd for a second thought.

He said at length—

"He is kind in his way, and good in his way, though it is not your father's way."

"Why should you never come back? How can you talk of never coming back, when you know I shall die if you do not?" and her wet face was pressed against the sleeve of her lover's velvet coat.

"I thought you said you would never forgive me," he said, rather too triumphantly.

"I did not mean to do so," said Leah, sobbing,

"but I forgot my anger at the thought of losing you."

"How is your father?" said the lover, thinking whether he might propose to Leah to accompany him at once to town, to live with him without the performance of that magical ceremony which only, in this world of change, is found sufficiently potent to continue the bondage of two lives, however loving when they first are attracted to each other; and, strange to say, to continue the attachment, so much does the heart, as well as the mind, reconcile itself to what is inevitable.

"My father is doing well—my poor father!" replied Leah. "He tried to save me, and all the pain and suffering he now endures are because he loved me so much."

"How long will it be before he is well again?"

"Mr. Scars says, if there are no bad symptoms, he will be able to get about again in six weeks' time."

"If you were not here, who would nurse him? Could not that old woman?"

"Old Molly? You might as well say if a man lost his right arm, could he not feed himself with the left? He would be compelled; but the loss would not be the less miserable to him. I am glad you came to see me in the night. In the day I shall not be able to leave him."

"Leah, listen to me! In six weeks I will come

back and see you again. By that time Mr. Preston will be quite well, I trust. Look, my darling, at that glimmer of light! I had no notion I had been with you so long. You must go back to your room, lest it should be known that you have spent nearly an hour with me alone in the forest; and I must go back softly into the Holmes, for your character's sake. Give me one embrace, my Leah."

She hung her head. The idea that she had acted imprudently had not struck her till his last words. Their meeting had been so innocent, that she had not anticipated that blame could be cast on her. She had not thought evil, and had not, therefore, avoided the appearance of it. He snatched her to his breast, and pressed her tightly to him, and her face, still depressed, came against something hard and rough.

"Oh, something hurts me!" she said, putting her hand up to shield her cheek. "What is it?" and she touched the locket,

"Rich with barbaric gold, and rough with gems,"

which Lady Barbara had hung there.

"What is this?" she cried, drawing him by it into the open space where the dawn gleamed on its sparkling brilliants. On the outward side, which first caught her eye, there was black hair under glass. She turned it, and saw the snake-like eyes of Lady Barbara gleaming on her as in triumph.

Leah gave a cry of pain, and dropped the bauble, turning away at this fresh proof of treachery in her lover.

"I declare," said Sir Edgar, becoming desperate, "I did not want the foolish toy. She would hang it round my neck; I could not help it!"

"Could not help it!" replied Leah. "Man, do not continue to make yourself contemptible in my eyes by your falsehood. Should any great gentleman come and tie his portrait round my neck, what would you think of me did I answer that I could not help it?"

She flung off his arm from her waist, and walked rapidly to the door of her father's house. Sir Edgar ran after her, and seized her hand.

"One moment, Leah! I only love *you*. Let this be a proof of it;" and he jerked off the locket and chain, and placed them in her bosom. She tore them out with indignation, and flung them at his feet.

"Good-bye, then, Leah! you will not see me again," he said; and he sprang over the pales, and was lost in the shadow of the trees, through which the cold rays of morning had not yet penetrated. They danced and quivered, however, on the oval locket of diamonds, which sparkled amongst the rival dewdrops on the wet turf. Leah picked it up. She dared not let it be seen by Molly or Dick Crozier, when he came to attend the pony. She would do it up when all the world were awake, and

send it to Sir Edgar. She hated even to touch that proof of his falsehood.

Sir Edgar reached the Holmes unperceived, cursing his ill-luck, the donor of the locket, and every one but himself. He would go off to London that very day. He would start as soon as he had said adieu to Miss Elliot and her father. Lady Barbara would be late at breakfast, so he would leave a few formal lines of leave-taking. It would be impossible to see her, and perhaps to be interrogated as to the fate of the locket, and to have to invent unnumbered falsehoods to account for its absence.

"I was a fool to throw it away because I was angry, and thereby get myself into endless trouble," said Sir Edgar, as he stepped into his luxurious bed, and forgot his vexation in sleep, which comes more readily to the call of the young than to those heads over which time has shed the grey livery of fifty years.

When his valet came to him at nine o'clock on the following morning, he found his master already partly dressed, and he was the bearer of a message from Sir Edgar to Mr. Elliot, begging permission to wait on him in his dressing-room for a few minutes' conversation.

Mr. Elliot, who hated to be talked to on unpleasant subjects, was unwilling to receive his young visitor, lest Sir Edgar might think it necessary to

refer to the broken engagement between him and Miss Elliot. However, it could not be avoided; and he was relieved when his guest explained that he was anxious to express his acknowledgments for Mr. Elliot's prolonged hospitality, and to tell him that he had that morning received letters which made it incumbent on him to see his guardian immediately. Mr. Elliot bowed very gravely in assent to a reason so cogent, knowing all the time that the letter-bag, which had only arrived a moment before Sir Edgar entered, was still at his side unopened.

"I wonder what that young fool is after now," was the thought of the old man.

On the dressing-table was a rose, which Miss Bruce had pinned into his button-hole before dinner on the previous evening. Sir Edgar's eyes lighted on it with a merry glance.

"There is no fool like an old fool," he thought. "Poor little Rose!" he said to himself as he left the room, after receiving Mr. Elliot's somewhat stately adieux. "I wish I could do anything to save this old Essex worthy from giving her a mother-in-law so utterly unworthy of her purity and goodness. Rose must, like the bee, have extracted sweet nutriment out of poison flowers, otherwise how could such a charming, honest, sensible girl have been educated by this woman, and not been spoilt by her? But I am a fool to throw away my sympathy on any one

when I have so many perplexities of my own. Now to write my letter to my charming bride that would be."

Sir Edgar sat down in the library to write his letter. He was sadly puzzled to know what to say, or how to begin. He had never before committed himself in writing to any one. It was not his way. What should he call her? She had desired him to give her the pet name of Bab. "Dear Bab!" that would not do. It sounded so flippant. "Dearest Bab!" Then he thought he might well call her "dearest Bab," as he knew no other Bab in the world. Still he hated the word "dearest" as applied to her. "The note shall not have any invocation; that will mean all manner of things."

"A letter I have received this morning ['by-the-bye, are they come yet? I must see to that'] compels me reluctantly to tear myself away from the spot which contains the creature who is dearest to me in the world. I hasten to town to see my guardian, and I trust, my troublesome business being concluded, I shall soon find myself once more free to seek the presence of her whose smile is my sunshine and whose word is my law.

"Ever yours,

"Edgar South."

This note he desired the footman to give to Lady

Barbara as soon as he had gone, and now he went to the breakfast-table, where Rose was ready to pour out his coffee, though Miss Bruce had not made her appearance. Rose always looked a beautiful Aurora in the morning, in her clean muslin dresses and flowing ringlets; they curled naturally, and were, therefore, independent on atmosphere.

"Rose," said the youth, looking at her affectionately, "I am going to take your advice, and confide everything to Mr. East."

"You will have to bespeak his indulgence before you begin," said Miss Elliot. "What a tangled skein you will have to unwind! First he believes you are betrothed to me; then, in spite of the chance of my breaking my heart, you at Cambridge flung yourself, two years ago, at the feet of Lady Barbara. She refuses you. Then you make love to Miss Bruce. You repeat your offer to Lady Bab, having left me lamenting; and now that she has consented to make you a happy man, you are tearing your hair with vexation. You are like little Tom Pilcher, who risked his neck in climbing an apple tree, and cried because they were crab-apples."

"You may laugh at me as much as you please; but see that you have not occasion to cry before long. Get rid of that woman as soon as you can."

"I suspect you are mortified, Sir Edgar, that Miss Bruce has consoled herself for your cruelty by carrying her cargo of mincing looks and coaxing ways to

another market. However, I believe that you are really kind in intention towards me, and," she said, putting her soft, young hand into his, "if I ever hear of any follies committed by you, I shall think of the terrible night of the fifteenth, and do justice to the heroism of your acts."

"I fear you give me more credit than I deserve and that if you knew all you would see that in one instance I reversed the act of that nursery hero—

> 'Robin-a-bobbin, who bent his bow,
> And brought down a pigeon instead of a crow.'"

"I don't know what you meant to do; I only know what you did."

"There is one thing I am determined on," rejoined Sir Edgar—"I will *not* marry Lady Barbara."

"Do not be too rash; you may repent this decision."

"I certainly should repent if I married her. But the horses are impatient. Good-bye, Rose. If you had loved me as you ought to have done, Miss Elliot, you might have saved me from this predicament."

Rose looked at him kindly. "I cannot promise to mend in that particular," she said, "but you may count on my liking; I cannot dignify the feeling by the name of friendship." She kissed her hand to him as the carriage swept by the window, and

then sat down to finish her breakfast in peace, the comfort of her meal having been somewhat disturbed by the suggestions thrown out by Sir Edgar with regard to Miss Bruce and her father.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Excuse me then, you know my heart,
But dearest friends, alas! must part."

GAY.

SHE had not long finished breakfast, and was going to see that Luke had done his duty to her flowers, by opening the lights in the greenhouse, when she had a summons to attend Lady Barbara in her dressing-room.

Rose went with reluctant feet. She did not like her ladyship, and would rather not have had a private interview with her.

"Sit down here, Rose," she said, as Miss Elliot entered the room; and she drew up her feet to make room for her on the sofa on which she was reclining. "I want to speak to you, my love;" and she applied her salts to her nose.

As Rose did not ask what affected her so much, as Lady Bab had anticipated, her ladyship was obliged to go on.

"I think I mentioned to you that two years since Sir Edgar South told me that his life was mine to keep or throw away, as I chose."

"Yes," said Rose, taking advantage of a slight

pause, "and when I asked if you had accepted him, you replied that it was not likely that, with your advantages, you should sacrifice yourself to a well-to-do young baronet, or something equally contemptuous."

Rose was but a woman after all, and had flushed with indignation at the time at the denigrating way in which the youth had been spoken of, who had been considered by his guardian and her father as a fit husband for herself.

"Two years make a great difference," said the lady, puzzled how to account for her change of purpose, which, in reality, had arisen from the absence of more eligible offers.

"I do not imagine that the two years have much improved his fortune, for his guardian is, Sir Edgar says, liberal in his allowance, and is too wise to send him to money-lenders at twenty, when he will have a right to draw his full income at twenty-one. You see, Lady Bab, his well-to-do means will not have much increased by the accumulations on his property, and with your wealth, I should think the question of a few thousands immaterial," said this practical young woman, who wanted to avoid the sentimental element in the conversation.

Lady Barbara sighed.

"You, my dear Rose, are so unsympathetic. You were not borne in your lover's arms from a burning room. You did not listen to his words murmured

through the blanket—'My darling, I have saved you; you are dearer than life to me'—words uttered with such intensity of truthful feeling, that they vibrated to the heart pressed to his, by the undeniable ring of their passion. I might have distrusted the utterances of compliments; I could not disbelieve assurances which crowned such an act of self-devotion. I have known what it is to be loved," continued the lady, "more than once or twice, but never have I heard but once such tones of truth from a lover."

Rose was puzzled. She saw that for once Lady Barbara believed herself to be speaking of a fact, and now the half-confidence of Sir Edgar led to misapprehension and confusion between the ladies.

"Doubtless you must know best, Lady Barbara; "but, were I in your place, I should rely more on his expressions of attachment than on the fact of being saved from the burning room. Sir Edgar is so brave that I believe he would have done the same for any old woman in the village, had she been in similar peril."

"My charming young friend, I can forgive a great deal from you, for I know that you are naturally a little mortified at the preference accorded to me over yourself when you were betrothed to Sir Edgar; but judging from the natural selfishness of man, from which my darling Edgar is not exempt, I do not believe he would have hazarded his life for

any one less dear to him than she to whom those passionate murmurs were uttered when he trod on the cool turf with his treasure safe in his arms."

"But he did save some one else!" said Rose, who thought Lady Barbara must have become forgetful in her egotism—for she could not imagine that she was ignorant of an act of such heroism performed by her lover, so well known as to be noticed in the county paper, and which in the village had made the women drop deeper courtesies, and the old men take off their hats, as Sir Edgar had passed, instead of pulling their forelocks.

"Who did he save?" said the lady, forgetful of grammar in her eagerness.

"Leah Preston, the work-girl."

"Oh yes! I know. You mean that by breaking open the door he gave her an opportunity of escape. My dear Rose," continued the lady, trying to blush, "when I think how very few clothes I had on—only my nightgown, in fact—I am glad that no one but my future husband should have the power of saying he had beheld me under such circumstances."

"I do not suppose that folks think of such deficiencies when life is in danger," said Rose, the prosaic. "Leah Preston did not follow you down, because, poor girl! the staircase fell in immediately you passed over it. Probably your double weight might have expedited the matter; but Sir Edgar climbed up a ladder and succeeded in rescuing the poor girl,

and has thereby made himself an object of reverence amongst the villagers, who are not accustomed to see sacrifices made for one of their own class."

Lady Barbara was intensely mortified that any one should divide the honour of being preserved with herself; but she was too proud to show it, so she only said she was glad the girl was safe, and it gave her a higher opinion of her Edgar than she had previously held. And now came out the real cause of her desiring to speak to Rose. The note she had received, and which was lying half open on her knee, was not as satisfactory as an interview would have been. She was mortified that he should have gone off to London without seeing her, and hoped to learn some particulars from Rose of the proximate cause of his departure.

Rose answered the cross-examination to which she was subjected as honestly as she could. Sir Edgar had seemed to think it desirable that he should see his guardian, and had gone to London for that purpose.

"No doubt to consult about making a proper settlement on me with my lawyer without waiting till he is of age," said Lady Barbara. "Well, my child, I wanted to see you, to say that, under the circumstances, I must tear myself away from the Holmes, a place which will be for ever hallowed in my memory by the extremes of terror and succeeding happiness which I have experienced whilst

under its hospitable roof. As I am now situated, I must consider the pleasure of one dearer than myself, and to do this I must proceed to London to be near *him* this afternoon."

"Must you go so soon?" said Rose. "It seems very sudden. Shall you go to an hotel or lodgings?"

"Of course not; I go to my aunt's, the Countess of Coverdale. She is always delighted to see me, though I shall have difficulties to contend with as regards Sir Edgar. Such a going down in the world, she will consider it."

Rose always held it to be her duty to speed the parting guest, and did so on the present occasion. She was rather sorry to be the third person in the company of her father and Miss Bruce. "I am always the third person, somehow!" said poor Rose.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Oh! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by-and-by a cloud takes all away!"

When Leah returned to the house she laid her restless head on her pillow and wept. She had the sense of having been laughed at and deceived, and she squeezed the locket in her hand till the palm was indented by the pattern of the brilliants. Gentle as she was, she felt that she hated the face of the woman who looked out at her from that glittering oval. What malice seemed to sparkle in the eyes! What a subtile expression hovered over the mouth! Surely she was not beautiful. And Leah was right as to the picture; for the strange beauty of the original consisted in mobility. She would seal it up without a word, and send it, as soon as she could get a messenger to-morrow morning.

She wept till she could weep no more. The fountain of her tears seemed dried up; then she slept, and fancied again that she was in Sir Edgar's arms, and that they were repassing the perilous wall under that fire-shower, the burning of which still ached in

her shoulder, now that it felt the renewing warmth of her bed. This time, in her dream, he stumbled and dropped her, and she fell down and down, till her head reeled under the giddy feeling of finding no resting-place for her frame; at length she struck the ground, and seemed to shake the bed as she woke full of mixed horror and relief.

Then she could not sleep again for some hours. Her memory recalled all the past dangers of the fire. Again she saw Sir Edgar clasp Lady Barbara in his arms, and leave herself to perish; again, driven to the window by the suffocating vapour, she appealed to the crowd below to save her—to her father; then she knew no more till Sir Edgar's arms had borne her up the turret stairs, and turned her face to breathe the pure air. Would any one have done this who did not love her? Would any one, not valuing her more than life itself, have dared so dreadful a death for her sake? "No. He does love; I am sure he does. That locket must have been placed round his neck in some jest. He snatched it off, and dropped it in my bosom. I was unjust—I was quite wicked to fling it at his feet. Had he wished to keep it, he needed not have twitched it off his neck for me. Oh, Edgar! will you ever come back? He spoke of six weeks. Many things may happen in six weeks. He said I should not see him again." Then, with a sudden hope—"He may not leave the Holmes to-day; he may come to see

me again, so I will make some excuse for going up to the house. Five o'clock striking! Ah! 'tis too soon yet;" and, murmuring her lover's name, Leah dropped asleep, and slept so long and heavily, that Molly came into her room at length impatiently.

"Miss Leah! your pa has asked for you. He would not have you awoke, however, and I don't think you would have roused up now but for the sound of the carriage and four dashing by, with that fine spark inside. The dust flew about so that I slammed the window to, to keep it out."

"Oh, Molly! was he going for a drive?"

"Lor', miss! how can I tell? Going over seas, I should think, by all the trunks and boxes outside."

Outward tranquillity fell on the scene of the late excitement at the Holmes. Could the student of Salamanca have passed over the fine old mansion and its noble belts of wood, and seen Mr. Elliot sitting amongst his books, Rose tending her flowers, and Miss Bruce carrying the marks of indolent self-enjoyment in her face and rather overgrown person, he would have declared that each individual was perfectly happy. Asmodeus only could have informed him that Mr. Elliot had a rankling uneasiness in his mind—a mental sore, which, when it was nearly healed by the absence of irritants, received fresh exacerbation every now and then, in the shape of

threatening letters, of which he had indolently taken no notice; then of communications from his lawyer, treating a matter in a grave and ponderous style, which Mr. Elliot had hoped he would have thought of little consequence.

The student, enlightened by the demon, would have found that Rose was suspicious of the intentions of her female companion towards Mr. Elliot, and doubtful how far her father responded to the evident preference evinced by Miss Bruce.

Miss Bruce would have been found to be the happiest; for a great ingredient, according to her idea, in the component parts of enjoyment, consisted in the pleasures of the palate; and, as she always contrived to obtain the nicest corner of the sweetbread for herself, and the strongest tea, and the largest amount of cream—her companions showing, in her opinion, a laudable indifference to these little niceties—she was well content with the world as it was, and did not desire any alterations save one, which would give her the right to the Holmes in perpetuity by her becoming Mrs. Elliot.

"I suppose Rose will marry," she said to herself, "and will have an income out of the estate. If Mr. Elliot rewards my devotion to his person and interests by marrying me, the sum shall be paid down; and then, if I have a son—as I shall, no doubt—Rose can have no further claim on the estate; and, even should I not be blessed by progeny, I

must be a greater fool than I believe myself to be if I cannot get him to leave the whole property to me at his death."

From the anxieties forced upon him by his unwelcome correspondence, the humble but evident adoration of his daughter's governess was a pleasant distraction. He began to look forward to those games of chess in the evening, where, when he was on the point of losing, without quite knowing why, he recovered himself so marvellously that he was even the victor in a game which the alternations of hope and fear had made attractive. Had Miss Bruce been a less skilful player, and had she been too easily beaten—had she possessed less art to conceal her planned defeats, the amusement would have been at an end.

Miss Bruce was really, he thought, a very clever young woman; with personal attractions, too, which might make her desirable as a wife even to a young man.

She took interest in subjects far above the reach of the intellect of his dear Rose, who was content to eat bread without reading aloud the discussion in the House of Peers as to the number of hours which should elapse before bread, newly baked, should be sold before it was eaten. England was now in the desperate position of being obliged to feed her population without the aid of foreign produce. Though some foreign wheat had been imported, small de-

pendence could be placed on the receipt of any more, and noble peers and pious bishops, who ate hot rolls fresh baked every morning, legislated that heavy fines should be imposed on the baker who sold a loaf of bread newly baked.

They were right, however, though, like sign-posts, they pointed the way they did not go; for the saving made in London alone by the sale of bread twenty-four hours old was estimated by the bakers at one-third of the whole consumption. Then there was the discussion as to making the punishment for adultery penal. The Bishop of Rochester declared and insisted that a guilty woman, even should she be divorced, would commit adultery if she married again. The Duke of Clarence, in a powerful speech, gave extracts from a sermon, preached at the Magdalen five years before, when the worthy prelate had sung to a different melody. All these discussions Miss Bruce read aloud to Mr. Elliot whenever, as was constantly the case, he had mislaid his spectacles; for the subjects treated were fitter for thirty years than eighteen.

So often were those spectacles mislaid, that Rose suspected her governess of hiding them; a suspicion confirmed when, after a long reading of the papers, they dropped from Miss Bruce's pocket as she pulled out her handkerchief one day.

"Dear me!" said Rose, with seeming innocence, "I did not know your eyes were so far gone as to

require spectacles already; but I suppose they do fail early with some folks."

Miss Bruce replied, with a crimsoned countenance, that she must have taken the glasses up by accident, as they lay under her handkerchief on the table.

Rose grew more and more uneasy. "This cuckoo of a woman is going to shoulder me out of my nest," said she to herself; "or she will try to make my position untenable by making me too uncomfortable to remain in it. She always contrives to take my place by my father's side, and I declare I think he begins to prefer her to me."

Rose did now what was injudicious, though, six weeks previously, it would have been attended by the desired result; but then, Rose's unsuspicious nature had not been awakened to observation by Sir Edgar.

"Papa, do you see what a tall girl I am?" and she drew herself up to her full height.

Mr. Elliot looked up and smiled at the bright-looking creature, who was as blooming as a sea-nymph.

"Yes, you are a tall girl. What do you require?—a cheque for a new dress, because you have outgrown all those made three months since?"

"No, papa; but, being in my eighteenth year, and so clever that I have nothing more to learn, or so stupid that for the last three years Miss Bruce has taught me nothing, I don't see why you should be put to the expense of keeping her any longer. I

am never so happy as when alone with you; and, as far as my comfort is concerned, I had rather be without her."

Rose uttered the last part of her sentence in a tone of some vexation, for she had seen unpleasant symptoms in the conscious flush of her father's face.

He did not answer immediately, and then replied, in a temporising manner, that her long residence in the family would make a sudden dismissal ungracious and ungrateful—that when Miss Bruce found a desirable situation she might suit herself as to going, if she pleased. "In the meantime," said the father, looking at his daughter's clouded brow, "you need no longer consider yourself her pupil"—a permission of little value to Rose, who had not done so for the last three years—"though I expect her to be treated with the consideration due to my guest;" an unnecessary injunction, as Rose was too ladylike to do otherwise.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"My father's look was one I seldom saw,
It gave no pleasure, nor created awe;
It was a kind of cool, contemptuous smile
Of witty persons overcharged with bile."

CRABBE.

A LONDON dining-room at night, only partially illuminated, with its deep maroon paper and heavy cloth curtains, which reflect no rays of light, is a cave of Trophonius capable of reducing to a state of collapse the most elastic and buoyant of spirits, especially when it is tenanted only by one or two persons. Its cavernous appearance struck Sir Edgar the more, because, when he stepped from his carriage, sunshine still threw slanting rays upwards on the chimney-tops of the opposite houses, and he passed from a world of light and life at once into gloom and repose. The footman who ushered him into the house did it in profound silence, and when his guardian came forward, and put forth two chilly fingers, and uttered the words in a cold tone, "You are late," Sir Edgar felt that he had been convicted of a heinous crime, and had not a word to say for himself. It was provoking, certainly, that a gentle-

man of fifty should have been tantalised by the knowledge that a charming little turbot was spoiling because this boy, not twenty-one, had chosen to loiter over some amusement or coquet with some pretty woman during the few precious half-hours that Mr. East had set aside for the gratification of his palate.

"I am very sorry," murmured Sir Edgar; then to himself, "If I had been among the Jews he could not have been more angry."

The thoughts of the lawyer ran thus:—"What an infernal thing it is to have the responsibility of a boy like this, who begins the first day he is in town by spoiling one's dinner! If South thought he repaid me for undertaking this guardianship by his legacy of one thousand pounds free of legacy duty, he was very much mistaken." But, though this was the way in which Mr. East chose to make a martyr of himself to himself in his reverie, he knew very well that there were various little advantages which had attended his charge of Edgar South's person and property, which he would have been sorry to forego. A glass or two of sherry swallowed quickly, to give him an appetite for his fish, put him into better temper, and it culminated when he found that the saddle of mutton was done to a turn.

The dinner passed in silence almost profound, for Mr. East was too cautious to commit himself even to the opinion of the fact that it was a fine day

whilst John the footman stood at the back of his chair.

At length the wine was placed on the table, together with the dessert, and Sir Edgar, whose spirits had gone down to zero during this dreadfully suspensive dinner, was left to improve the opportunity afforded him to unburden his mind as he might.

He repented his announced intention of consulting Mr. East. He had called in the morning, and written on his card a few words stating his wish to consult his guardian on a subject of importance, and now nothing but the dread of Lady Barbara, and of her determination to marry him forthwith, prevented his excusing himself on the score of sudden tooth-ache or headache, and flying from the field at once.

Mr. East saw the struggle in his mind, and saw also that he should not find out the cause of grief unless he put some leading questions.

"When a young man gets into trouble," was Mr. East's axiom, "'tis always for, or about, one of three things simple, or one of two compounded with the third, or it may be a compound of the three. The three rocks on which the juvenile's conduct is likely to split are women, horses, and money. This young fellow has never been particularly extravagant, and excepting that he likes to see good horses in his carriage, does not care for them. He has never betted at races, nor entered a horse for the Derby. It must be woman. I have heard he is

very devoted to them. Good-looking young fellow, too! No end of scrapes, I dare say."

"Left all well at the Holmes?"

"Yes, sir, pretty well."

"My friend Elliot in pretty good spirits?"

Sir Edgar thought of the flower on the dressing-table, and said, with a queer curl of his lip, "In *very* good spirits, I should say."

"A-a-ah!" said the lawyer, with a sound like a sigh of mysterious portent. "Poor fellow!"

"Yes, sir, poor fellow!" repeated Sir Edgar.

"Why poor fellow?" inquired Mr. East. "Has he told you anything?"

"No, sir; I only judge by my own observation."

"And you think matters look bad for him?"

"Yes, bad for him, worse for Miss Elliot, and of course very good for the other party."

"Heaven bless me!" thought Mr. East; "I suppose the girl has wormed it out of her father, and told it to her lover, and now he will want to be off the marriage."

"I suppose Miss Elliot told you?"

"On the contrary, I think she did not even suspect it till I warned her what was going to happen."

"Poor girl! Was she much cut up?"

"Oh dear no! She did not say much. Indeed, at the time I don't think she realised it to her own mind."

"Probably not. Poor thing! I suppose this is the point on which you have come to consult me?" Mr. East continued.

"No-o. I have a great regard for Mr. Elliot, but I was thinking more of myself naturally."

"Naturally," replied Mr. East. Then, in an inward tone, "Selfish young scamp!"

"Then I imagine that you wish to break off the contemplated match between Miss Elliot and yourself?"

"No, sir—I have already done so."

"Upon my word, young gentleman, this is sharp work. What an excellent member of the legal profession you would have made!"

"You do me honour, sir," said Sir Edgar, blushing, for he detected the sneer in the seeming compliment.

"There was a fire at the Holmes I understand," said the lawyer. "Elliot wrote to me to acquaint the office in which he is insured. Any lives lost? I heard something of some gallant act in saving two women."

"One was a lady."

"Ah! indeed, that makes a difference, no doubt," said Mr. East drily.

"Not in my feeling, Mr. East, though you seem to imply it. It was far more hazardous to save the simple woman than the lady of title, yet I did not hesitate; and this brings me to the gist of what I wished to say. I have acted very foolishly."

"One does not expect to find a sage at twenty," replied Mr. East quietly. "What is the foolishness? We lawyers and guardians never hear of the foolishness which has plunged our clients or wards into a slough till we are expected to pull them out."

"It is not that I expect you to do that quite, sir, but I wish you to tell me where I can set my feet firmly, and get out with as little dirt on my person as possible. I must confess to being seriously wounded in my tumble."

"Let me hear the circumstances."

But the door opened softly, as if on well-oiled hinges, and the grave footman brought in a note on a plated salver, and presented it to Sir Edgar. He turned it and groaned, for on the seal, which was the size of half-a-crown—the fashion in those days—was a coronet, and he knew that his iniquity, in the shape of Lady Barbara, had found him out.

Mr. East had amused himself in adding wine and sugar to the strawberries he had been crushing, and observed by a sidelong glance the nature of the communication. Then he saw the flushed face of the youth, which spoke of his trouble, and pushed the decanter of port towards him. It had been Mr. East's consolation under many circumstances, and he saw no reason why it should not be equally efficacious with his ward.

"The servant waits for an answer, sir."

"Say—I'm at dinner," said the poor youth, driven desperate, "and that I will send an answer."

He thrust the note into his capacious pocket, and sat with a perturbed countenance for a few minutes in silence.

Mr. East had finished his strawberries, and began to prepare another plateful.

"Well," he said at length, "let us get to the bottom of the folly."

"'Tis a long way down, sir."

"Go on, pray."

"Well, then, two years since Lady Barbara Westeura came down to stay with the wife of the Master of Trinity College. You know how crazy young men are to get ladies' society at the university. There were shoals of them at the parties given by Mrs. Trend, and Lady Bab had half the college at her feet. Perhaps you have seen her?"

"Only passing in her carriage. I thought her plain."

"She is so at first sight, but there is a strange fascination about her which turns ugliness into beauty. She played and sang to the harp; she was titled and wealthy. I did not think of the last qualification, but older men did, and it gave us pensioners and fellow-commoners intense satisfaction to see the old dons joining with clumsy and grotesque movement in this dance after the golden goose. I confess that I threw myself at her feet,

both physically and metaphorically, being desperately stricken. She laughed heartily; told me I was a child, and ridiculed my attachment with all the sharpness of a Beatrice. It was evident that she did not mean to take me for a Benedict; so when she left Cambridge I forgot her. It was not difficult —'out of sight, out of mind.'"

"Then I am to suppose that it was not Miss Elliot's probable loss of fortune and position that affected your decision as to breaking with her, but simple inconstancy?"

"Loss of fortune and position! Good heavens! Mr. East, what can you mean?"

"Why, you told me," said his host, "that you knew all about it, and had broken the intelligence to her;" and his face flushed with shame at the mistake he had made.

"I told you that I had mentioned to her that I believed her father was making a d——d old fool of himself with her governess, who flung herself at his head, till I thought I should have to fly the Holmes. But what about poor Rose? She is the sweetest, the most charming girl. It makes me wretched that she should ever suffer privations. I declare I'll go back and marry her at once; and then old Elliot may go off with the Bruce. Wonderful woman, the Bruce! Doesn't want any spider to teach *her* to reform her webs."

Mr. East had flung himself back in his chair

to enjoy a quiet laugh at his ward's versatility; then said gravely, "I must beg you will not mention to any one what I let out under the misapprehension of your knowing family involvements. The truth is, that there is a troublesome claimant to the estate of the Holmes, and, unless some circumstance, which I fear is unlikely, should happen, Mr. Elliot will ultimately lose it; of course we shall delay it as long as possible. The law gives us resources for that contingency."

Sir Edgar looked so grave, and so forgetful of his own trouble, that Mr. East was obliged to remind him that it was getting late, and he had better go on with his story.

"I declare I never should have broken off my engagement with Rose had I thought her property was certain——"

"Very right; but now do go on."

"I assure you, Lady Bab can't hold a candle to her."

"Pray why did you break your engagement, then?"

"Because I hated the notion of heirs being tied up, even to one of the loveliest girls I ever saw."

"Well! I don't understand what the present trouble consists of."

"Sir, I went to stay at the Holmes, and broke off my betrothal with Miss Elliot, and—and—there was the most delicately-beautiful girl—a work-girl—

and I love her more than any one I ever saw in the whole course of my life, and I mean to marry her."

"Whew!" said Mr. East. "A sempstress!"

"Yes," cried Sir Edgar; "she does take in plain work in a small way."

"You mean to marry *her*, Sir Edgar? Then what can be your business with me? May I inquire, just for curiosity, whether the note just now received was from the sempstress, and whether she generally seals her letters with a coronet?"

"Ah! that's the devil of it!" said Sir Edgar, who had taken half of the first bottle of port, and was now beginning the second. "There was a ball, and Lady Bab somehow entangled me into repeating my offer, and, to my horror, she caught at it. The house took fire that night. My girl, the one I loved, was in the next room to the one I did not much care about, but whom I was engaged to marry. I rushed up the burning staircase, and seized the wrong woman in the dark: they are much alike in height. I cursed myself when I took the blanket off with which, when surrounded by smoke and flame, I had enveloped her. I hazarded my life far more to fetch the work-girl down. Thanks be to Heaven! I saved her dear life!"

"All very fine! but from whom was that note?"

"That brings me to my greatest trouble. Lady Barbara, finding that I had saved her life, has taken a fancy to marry me forthwith. I must say that she

tried hard for Sir John Moore in the beginning of the evening. Hang it! when she put her arms round my neck, and blessed me for having saved her, I could not tell her I had taken her for another woman; and thus I am committed by my own words and my own act to marry this woman, when every thought of my heart is devoted to Leah Preston."

"Leah Preston!" said Mr. East, musing, "daughter of a psalm-singing fellow, mounted on an empty butter cask—one of his own, probably—a grocer in a small way. I know him. Lived with Lord North once; was then atheistical. Had a call—as they term it—goes raving away in another direction now. My dear fellow! do think twice before you link yourself with the daughter of a man like this! Fancy introducing your father-in-law to your friends—a sour-faced, splenetic preacher, who, if any one says, 'Tis a cold day,' will reply, 'Tis the weather the Lord pleases to send;' which, being a self-evident proposition, needs no assertion to back it. Fancy introducing such a fellow at your place at Silver Oaks to the rest of your guests. A pretty companion he would be on a wet Sunday! These preachers only pursue their vocation from the vanity of thinking they know better than the regularly-educated clergy. What a delight to call all your particular sinners to repentance! what dismay amongst your guests to find such an amateur chaplain, ever discoursing on the wrath to come, in season and out of

season, with no remembrance of Mrs. Adam's opinion that it is wicked to use good words out of church!"

"It does not follow that I should have the father to live with me because I marry the daughter," said Sir Edgar, with a very red face. He was ashamed at the prospect.

"If she is a good daughter, you would have to do so frequently; that is, if you cared for her happiness. With your wealth, good looks, and old family, you will be entitled to mix with the best society in your neighbourhood. Fancy, when the Duke of Silver Oaks dines with you, the spare-limbed, Methodistical parson, standing up with uplifted eyes, and hands clasped, uttering a prosaic grace, profane in its familiarity with sacred words, whilst the dinner gets cold; the lady—late sempstress—awkward and constrained by the novelty of her position, and by the numberless unforeseen ignorances of things by which she is surrounded; your face in a flame, from the impossibility of aiding or explaining her difficulties, divided as you will be by a crowd of guests, who politely repress their smiles, and look down to admire the patterns of their plates! Leah Preston is, I dare say, a lovely rustic now: fancy her twenty years hence—when you, at forty, will be still young—a coarse, bloated, ignorant woman, of whom you will be both weary and ashamed. Your children, if you have a family, will soon begin to regard their mother with some pity and more contempt. Pro-

bably she will take to drinking. It is really strange how invariably I have observed that to be the result, on the woman's part, of her being raised above her proper station. It never answers."

"The man always raises a woman to his rank," said Sir Edgar, grandly intrenching himself in the old axiom.

"Ah, yes! 'tis a fine theory; but it never, somehow, turns out to be true when practised. The woman is either a millstone round the man's neck, dragging him down, frustrating every effort he makes to rise, or he slips his neck out of the chain, and leaves her to throw the shadow of her dulness over the home to which he has neither pleasure nor pride in inviting his associates."

Sir Edgar kicked the poker violently, and it upset with a crash, knocking down the tongs and shovel.

"But," said the methodical lawyer, "let us go back to the statement of the case. Have you promised to marry Leah Preston?"

"I don't quite know. I may have said that I could not marry her till I was of age."

"And what does that note refer to, may I inquire? Was it from the titled lady or the sempstress? Show it to me."

Sir Edgar took it from his pocket, and threw it on to the fire.

"I would prefer your not reading it, sir. I never show women's letters."

"Well! the very circumstance of your receiving a letter, thickly crossed, when you only parted from the writer yesterday, proves that she considers her claims on you to be beyond doubt."

"I do not deny her claims. I have been fool enough to admit them to her, if not by words, in manner. But I cannot give up Leah Preston."

"My dear fellow, you cannot marry either woman till you are of age—unless you choose to be incarcerated for the next eight months. Wards in Chancery, luckily, cannot play tricks without paying the penalty. The Lord Chancellor might consent to your marriage with Lady Barbara, but it would not be desirable that the ceremony should take place till you have the power of making some settlement of part of your property on her. As to the other, I should think a strait-waistcoat and straw the best treatment for such lunatic conduct as you propose."

"Well, sir! what do you advise?"

"If you consider that you are bound in honour by what you have said to marry Lady Barbara, of course, as a gentleman, you must do so. One cannot throw over a lady of title as you can a village work-girl. I am not sure that your baronetcy might not be changed into a barony under such circumstances."

"I am sure I should not care for it!"

"Not at twenty, my dear boy, but you would do so at forty and upwards. The wise course is to look

forward as much as possible, as did the politic lawgiver, the Israelitish prime minister amongst the Egyptians, who foresaw the year of famine through the vista of tall sheaves of an abundant harvest. He judged of the whole, and not the part immediately under his eyes at the moment. So ought you. But you will not leave town again yet?"

"Not for a few weeks," said Edgar; "and, if you will allow me, I will ring for my carriage. I have kept you up to a late hour, I fear."

"We shall meet again soon," said the lawyer, shaking the hand of the youth, as he left him. "Poor boy! I must not let him ruin his prospects in that way," he decided, as the door closed on Sir Edgar.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Some smack of age in you; some relish of the saltness of time."

Sir Edgar did not write an answer. He called the following day, and was shown by a bald-headed butler into a small drawing-room, where an old lady, grey and grim, sat with spectacles on her nose, reading Fox's "Book of Martyrs." Her hair was turned up over a cushion on the top of her head—a fashion which became a beautiful face, as shown in Newton's head of Belinda, but revealed all the asperities of age in Lady Coverdale, who was too proud to attempt to conceal any of its ravages. If folks did not like her as she was, they might look another way, she was accustomed to say. When Sir Edgar was announced she rose to her full height, and, crossing two brown, skeleton-looking arms over the bow of her white muslin apron, she made a profound courtesy. Sir Edgar bowed thrice, and then sank gracefully into the chair the old butler placed for him.

"My lady is rather hard of hearing," said he.

"I'm as deaf as a post!" screamed the aunt of

his lady-love, suspecting the nature of the whisper; "so 'tis useless to try to talk to me. Sit still till Lady Barbara comes."

Sir Edgar obeyed, with the unpleasant conviction that, though the old lady's head was bent over her book, and her eyes were nearly protected from observation by the owl-like size of her glasses, she was glaring over them with a stony look which, young man of the world as he was, made the colour mount to his cheeks.

The remorseless eyes never moved, and Sir Edgar fidgeted with his gloves, pulling them on, and pressing them down between every division of his fingers, as if his comfort depended on their reaching the skin which covers the connecting muscle.

"'Tis no use; you won't manage that," said the unfeeling old woman, and the voice came with a sound of laughter so strident, and the face looked so uncanny from the discrepancy between the grinning of the toothless jaws and the immobility of the eyes and eyelids, that Sir Edgar dropped his *chapeau bras* in his nervous flurry. He began to think that Lady Coverdale, as a guest at Silver Oaks, might be as objectionable as Leah Preston's father. He never before had met this worthy woman, whom he would be expected to reverence as his aunt, and he wondered which of the three fates she most resembled in her wrinkles and general gauntness.

His meditations were agreeably interrupted by

the movement of the door-handle, and Lady Barbara came in, with less flashing in her eyes than at night, and less of brilliancy in her general effect, but more tortuous and lithe than ever in her movements; probably she seemed so from contrast with the rigidity of her relative.

Sir Edgar bowed, and she courtesied, and, holding out her hand, she led Sir Edgar up to the lady, saying—

"Lady Coverdale, as my nearest relative, I present to you the gentleman who has, by his devotion and by the gallantry he displayed in saving my life, obtained the right to link his fate with mine."

"Umph!" said the old lady; "might have guessed as much by his face." She muttered something else, which was lost to the ear, but which seemed to Sir Edgar, by the movement of her lips, to make the syllables "poor fool!"

"I fear your aunt does not approve me," said Sir Edgar.

"'Oh, 'tis only pretty Fanny's way,'" said Lady Bab. "She is invaluable as a chaperon, for her respectability is undoubted, and one may talk for ever before her, and say all manner of things, without her being a bit the wiser."

"Very true," replied Sir Edgar, with an uncomfortable feeling that Lady Barbara had frequently made the experiment with other lovers; and his thoughts went back to the fresh purity of Leah

with a longing such as, in a region of hot sand, one might crave for a cup of iced water.

They sat down this time on a sofa. Sofas in those days were hard, and had two unyielding cylinders at each end; but they suited the propriety of Lady Coverdale's drawing-room.

"Was your interview with your guardian satisfactory, my Edgar?" said the lady.

"Alas! no, madam," said the lover; "anything but satisfactory."

Sir Edgar thought of the blasphemies uttered against Leah in her future fortieth year.

"Why was it not? Surely Mr. East could make no objection to your union with *me?*"

"Of course not, beautiful Barbara! The distress to my mind is, that he says it is impossible my wishes should be crowned with success till the expiration of some months—not till February, in fact—when I shall be of age. I shall not till then be enabled to make such settlements on my future wife as would be befitting my devotion to her." And he took up the hand which was conveniently near him, and kissed it; the result of which was an unearthly chuckle from the neighbourhood of Fox's "Book of Martyrs."

"Never mind my aunt," said Lady Bab, seeing how much disturbed Sir Edgar looked; "'tis only her way. But, dearest, this is indeed miserable news. However, there is no reason why we should not be

together constantly." And Lady Bab thought of the triumph of having so handsome a youth in constant attendance on her.

She continued to extort returns for the love-speeches she made, till Sir Edgar grew more and more wretched under the dead-looking eyes of the old aunt. At length a prolonged cackle from Lady Coverdale made Lady Bab, who had waited in vain for one of Edgar's pretty speeches, ask her aunt, in a sharp, shrill voice, that struck clearly the lax tympanum of the old lady's ear, what was the matter.

"Nothing, my dear. I was looking at a young man in a picture here, stretched on a rack to make him confess, and *he wouldn't.*"

"Aunt is so very odd," said Lady Barbara, apologetically, to Sir Edgar, with a face which flushed through the slight tinge of rouge on her olive skin. Her aunt's observation made her uneasy, and, in desperation, Edgar sought to relieve her new-born and evident anxiety by some better-feigned expression of tenderness. In this he succeeded, for her vanity was rampant, and she could not believe it possible that she was not beloved. "Besides," she argued, "did he not hazard his life to save mine?" Thus, with less reason, she consoled herself, as Leah had previously done.

Before Sir Edgar left Lady Coverdale's residence he found himself engaged to go to Drury Lane in

the evening, and to ride with Lady Barbara in the park next day. He went away, feeling himself still more entangled in the web his own folly had enabled her to wind around him, and speculating whether, at sixty, Lady Barbara would resemble her maternal aunt, Lady Coverdale. "There is really a look not unlike, even now," he said.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Who stopp'd to observe there were spots in the sun,
When they joy'd in the harvest his fervour had won;
His valour triumphant, the glory they glean,
And forgave his frail fair for her beautiful mien."

Sir Edgar went to Drury Lane, and saw Mrs. Siddons in the *Fatal Marriage*. He also saw amongst the audience George III. and his ugly wife, and Lord Nelson and his beautiful mistress, accompanied by her husband, Sir William Hamilton. Very loyal feeling was shown towards their Majesties, and the National Anthem was sung, all the audience standing. But when Lord Nelson appeared, with the most beautiful woman in Europe on his remaining arm, and seated himself in the box, the enthusiasm became tumultuous. The men waved their hats, the women their handkerchiefs. "Long live the hero of a hundred fights!" was re-echoed again and again with loud cheering. The sovereignty of valour and beauty was greater than that of royalty.

Lord Nelson bowed low and repeatedly to his enthusiastic admirers, and the lady, whose wonderful

charms still live in some of their phases on canvas, by the hand of Romney, looked more proudly beautiful from the happiness that lighted her perfect features on hearing the applause given to the hero. It was the triumph of valour and female loveliness over respectability, ugliness, and common-place character. Queen Charlotte, luckily, did not see the frail charmer, who cast her wonderful spells over every one, male and female, who came within her magic circle. Lady Hamilton sat on the same side, in the tier above the royal box. She was richly dressed, and resplendent in jewels—the gifts of crowned heads, and dukes, and lords of high degree.

Men are more decent in the present day, if not more virtuous. No Nelsons now can ever exist: the march of modern improvement in warfare forbids the exhibition of equal prowess. No man of equal genius and courage can so dazzle men's eyes by the glory of his acts that they blink the knowledge of his insults to virtue and decency.

Lady Hamilton's evident triumph, notwithstanding her consciousness that her position with Lord Nelson was understood by the ladies and gentlemen who waved their handkerchiefs, and shouted in their admiration of the pair, made Sir Edgar cogitate on the scene.

The next day he dined with a party of gentlemen at the house of his guardian, Mr. East, and the con-

versation, when the servants were withdrawn, turned on the reception afforded to Lord Nelson, and on the extraordinary loveliness of Lady Hamilton. She was visited by women of undoubted propriety. One gentleman spoke of the grace and voluptuous charm of her shawl-dance, with which she had delighted a large evening party at his mother's, Lady Witchcomb's, house. Another, an older man, had seen her when she was a nursemaid in the family of a small shopkeeper in Holborn. They spoke of her filial love, which insisted that her vulgar old mother should share every enjoyment in which she herself partook, setting at nought all false as well as all true shame. Her character and the events of her life were freely discussed—her disregard of moral ties, and the charity, so open-handed, by which she might be thought to have covered a multitude of sins.

"She has done well for herself," said one gentleman.

"Yes," replied Mr. East. "Let us see what would have been her fate had she remained a virtuous nurserymaid. A shilling per week for wages, and her board found. Hard fare, and seven noisy, troublesome brats, with whose ill-tempers or caprices she must put up night and day, without the love which strengthens the heart of their drudge of a mother to the performance of similar duties. Her symmetrical form disguised in coarse woollen gar-

ments, her delicate feet weighted by heavy boots, her exquisite complexion exposed to the scorching sun or the pelting rain. With a child pulling at her apron, and another thrown over her shoulder, she was seen coming from the chandler's with a pound of dips in her hands. Blown about by keen winds and peppered by a hail-storm, her feet sinking in the sludge of the half-melted snow, her clothes laced with mud, she reminded the spectator of the taunt uttered by a successful votary of pleasure, who sang—

> 'I bow from the carriage to all that I meet,
> Whilst draggletailed chastity's walking the street.' "

"Yes, it is true," said another; "but to judge of a life you must watch it to the end. Lady Hamilton, now young, clever, wealthy, and admired, but outraging every feminine virtue, may die contemned and deserted by all in her age."

"If she do," was the answer, "the only fact proved will be, that she came at the conclusion of her life to the position in which she would have been, and her mother was, before Lady Hamilton adopted that course of life which raised that mother from penury to affluence. It would be difficult to persuade the rate-payers of the parish on which Mrs. Lion had claims of the immorality of the daughter who has taken her mother from the poor-house, miscalled workhouse, and placed her in a position of equal luxury with herself. Had both

Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton been unmarried, it would have been difficult to prove the injury done to society by the outrage of public morals, shown in their living together without the sanction afforded by the marriage ceremony; but there can be no difficulty in proving the culpability of the parties, when a trusting husband is deceived, on one side, and an innocent woman, whose husband could find no fault with her, according to his own showing, neglected and insulted, on the other. The line of demarcation is so slight between marriage and no marriage, as shown in the discrepancies between the Scotch and English law, that it is not to be wondered at that some women think they may as well trust to the generosity of their lovers altogether, and dispense with the tie. If the woman obtain social advantages, and lives a life of luxury with a gentleman, instead of being at the mercy of a churlish husband in her own rank of life, it is difficult to prove her to be in the wrong, except on abstract principles, by which she is likely to be little influenced. It is difficult to show that she did not choose the path most conducive to her own happiness, and to that of her family."

"I think," said Mr. East, "that each case stands isolated and distinct from another. If a girl loves fondly, she would rather pass some years of happiness with a man whom she dotes on than practise self-denial, both in choosing poverty and giving

up her lover's society, even though he should ultimately desert her. No *gentleman*, I trust, ever enters into an arrangement of this kind unless he is prepared to sacrifice some portion of his fortune in providing for her when it may be incumbent on him to form a more convenient and durable tie."

"The most accomplished gentleman in Europe does not set us the best example in that way," said a young man, smiling.

Mr. East shrugged his shoulders.

"He is, I should say, if he were not an heir-apparent, a mean hound, and deserves lashes and kicks. No good in manhood can come out of a youth so ineffably shabby."

The subject of conversation was here taken up by a gentleman who had travelled in the East, and mentioned the odium heaped on the Turks for their traffic in Circassian women. Frightful pictures were drawn of innocent girls torn from their mothers' arms, and from the fathers who defended them at the expense of their own lives, to fill the harems of the *polygamitic* Turk; the fact being that the virgins were educated for the purpose as fully as English girls for the matrimonial market in England, and disappointment clouded the brow of parent and child, in Circassia as in England equally, when the desired object, an establishment, was not secured. The subject of polygamy was then

introduced, and defended from the charge of immorality by the argument that the Almighty would not have sanctioned it, as recorded in the Old Testament, had it contained in itself any germ of sin.

When similar subjects are discussed every man applies them to his own position. Sir Edgar left the table that night with the conviction that he should be inflicting no injury on Leah by making her his mistress, even should he be compelled by the stern dictates of honour to marry Lady Barbara. Mr. Preston would be well again in a short time. If Leah wished it, he would settle a hundred a year on him for his life; and he stepped more proudly when he thought of his own great generosity as compared with that of the prince who took from the "Bird of Paradise" the gifts with which he had previously loaded her.

"Poor darling Leah!" he said; "I had rather marry her — much; but then I've made a fool of myself to that other woman. Oh that Lady Bab would fall in love with and marry some one else!"

His life became wilder and more reckless. He drank more, and became less prudent in other ways. His guardian remonstrated.

"Really, I am disturbed, both for your health's and pocket's sake," he said. "Go abroad: I recommend it; if you wish it, I will insist on it. Do not

return till you are on the eve of your majority. You will not be the worse for returning to the Continent, and seeing fresh scenes and fresh faces; perhaps time may do something towards ridding you of your perplexities."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Man is but man, inconstant still, and various;
There's no to-morrow in him like to-day:
Perhaps the atoms rolling in his brain
Make him think honestly this present hour.
The next, a swarm of base, ungrateful thoughts,
May mount aloft.
Who would trust chance, since all men have the seeds
Of good or ill, which should work upwards first?"

DRYDEN.

VERY gentle and devoted was Leah to her father. "Wonderful still Miss Leah is for a nurse!" observed old Molly, whose ministrations were not of the quietest character, and who generally swept down plates and teacups from chairs put by the bed-side of the invalid by the whisk of her multitudinous petticoats. Caleb Preston was only afraid that his love for his daughter was sinful in its excess. He taxed himself with idolatry. "Is she not dearer to me than Jesus Christ, who died that I should be saved; who redeemed me, and those few whom He chose for his own, by His most precious blood-shedding?"

He tried to think of this, and to follow his daughter less lovingly with his eyes, when she came in the morning, dearer, and as pure as the first

beams of sunshine that streamed over his small bed. But nature would have her triumph in the mind enfeebled by suffering. Leah was his very life; he could not love her less. He made her kneel by his pillow at night and in the morning, and then with pointed fingers, and lips that trembled with the earnestness of their supplication, he poured out first his thanksgivings to the Power by whose beneficence his child had been snatched like a brand from the burning, and then his prayers for the good youth who had hazarded his own life to save that of a stranger. "Surely he shall be blessed in this world and the next, my Leah!" he would say, as he sank back exhausted; and Leah responded sadly, "I trust so, my father," and said no more. The subject was too sacred; the consciousness of concealment from her father too painful.

As Caleb Preston recovered he expected to see Leah rejoice in his restoration to health. The six weeks had elapsed, and one day he prepared the surprise of standing up dressed when she brought his breakfast into his room. She flushed, and tears of tenderness filled her eyes as she kissed his brow gravely, and said, "God bless you, my father!" Caleb was disappointed. There was all the loving heart he had expected, but not the beaming eye and the exulting spirit. "She is of a depressed nature, like that of my Lucy." He looked at her with a stealing terror, which was chilling his heart. "If

she should resemble her mother in delicacy of constitution!" But no; the swelling bosom, set on a fine conformation of chest, gave no token of pulmonary mischief. The tint on her face, though delicate, was indicative of health. "How very graceful and comely she is!" thought the doting father, as he detected the proofs of race coming from the mother's family in her slender waist and delicate hands and feet. What would she do when he died? His brow saddened at the thought of death, but the pang was unselfish. He should leave her unprotected. He could not endure that she should be married to any of the boors around their village. He would save every penny, and, if above want, she could live unmarried, and dedicate herself to the service of God by a life of devotion to Him, and of usefulness to others. Then his thoughts went back regretfully to Perth—that unhappy youth—disobedient, hardened, steeped in wilfulness and obstinacy. Had he done his duty, he might have been a strong tower in the future to his weaker sister; but, in his blame of the absent, he never doubted the justice of his own act in expelling his son.

Leah had counted the days till the expiration of the six weeks, but Sir Edgar had not arrived. That period past, she was without a break of light in the leaden horizon of her life. No doubt he had been too angry to return again, and now he had probably forgotten both his anger and her, the cause of it.

She had rather that he should have retained the anger, and remembered her. Nothing seemed to her so terrible as that blank, voiceless, sightless forgetfulness.

Meanwhile, her father, for the first time, was enabled to perform the service in the barn on the first day of the week. The meeting was crowded, for the people hungered, they said, for the word of Christ, the bread of life. The absence of reticence which distinguishes the nonconforming clergy enables them, by allusions to passing events, to produce more vivid effects on the feelings of their congregation than the educated Church-of-England gentlemen can ever hope to attain. The people were rejoiced to see again that powerful preacher, Caleb Preston; and he, pleased, conscious, and wrought up by the enthusiasm expressed in the rugged faces of those around him, surpassed himself in the rough and unstudied eloquence with which he spoke of his daughter's deliverance and his own sufferings. Leah, pale and sad, was distressed at his references to the past terrors from which her lover had rescued her, and could hardly sympathise with the triumph with which his successful oratory had filled her father's mind.

As they walked home together he yearned for her approbation, without which his pleasure was incomplete. He glanced at her preoccupied countenance once or twice, to guess what her thoughts

might be, but saw no responsive look of triumph. Another love, and an unhappy one, had taken the place of her filial devotion, and, like a far-spreading cedar, had killed all the smaller shrubs which had grown under it.

He could bear her silence no longer.

"They were greatly stirred in spirit, my child, at my discourse?" in a pleading tone of interrogation.

"Yes, father," said Leah absently.

"It gave them pleasure that I should again minister to their spiritual wants. I saw it in their honest faces."

"That is true," responded the daughter.

"Didst thou observe, Leah, how I awoke their drooping attention by the comparison I made when I said that thou, in the flock, did'st resemble a soul to be saved? that I, in my efforts to save thee, was as good works, striving vainly to reach the necessary height, falling back helpless and wounded? whilst faith—faith!" he cried, looking up with eyes flashing with enthusiasm, and arms lifted to heaven; "faith, like that noble youth, prompted by charity, aided by hope, risked all things, gained all things."

"Even so, my father;" but her voice sounded like a knell.

More than once Leah had been seized by a terrible suspicion that her father's religious impressions had in some degree overset his judgment. His severity

to Perth had originated the idea, and the excitement he had shown on the present occasion confirmed the secret terror.

She turned and looked at him with eyes full of tenderness, and with a feeling of protecting love, such as a mother suffers for a dear son who seems to be irresponsible for his actions, prompted as they are by false or exaggerated views of life.

"No one shall ever know it, if it be so," thought Leah with a shudder. The atrocities perpetrated on the insane at the close of the last century were too horrible to dwell upon. The look of love satisfied the yearning heart of poor Caleb.

"She is always 'still,' as Molly says, but she does sympathise with me, I am sure;" and he drew her hand within his arm, and patted its infantile roundness and whiteness with his, embrowned and roughened by the toil of fifty years.

The middle of August had come, and yet no signs of Sir Edgar. It was two months since he had declared he would return in six weeks. Caleb Preston had resumed his old habits, and Leah was more satisfied about his state of mind now that no new circumstance had occurred to ruffle the even tenor of his days. Miss Elliot had been very kind in inquiring for him, and sending him small delicacies during the illness consequent on his accident.

Leah, sitting in her small garden, and seeing the

slight figure of the young lady walking alone in the evenings amongst the stately trees of the Holmes, fancied that she was depressed, judging from the slow step and drooping head; and she was correct in her supposition. Mr. Elliot seemed more and more devoted to games of chess, and as the daylight gave short evenings, Miss Bruce and Rose's father usually now began before dinner, and carried on their amusement late into the night. Rose knew nothing of the secret anxieties which preyed on her father's memory, and which, as connected with Rose's future provision in life, always weighed him down in her presence, or when the thought of her intruded on his mind. The chess was to his mind what a dram would have been to his body. He forgot his great anxieties in the small interests of his "queen" and "bishops." As Rose knew nothing of the causes of his conduct, she could not know how suitable was the remedy; and, believing herself to be set aside for her late governess, she was wounded accordingly. She was glad when, one morning, a letter from Sir Edgar announced his wish to pay a fortnight's visit to the Holmes, previous to his departure for the Continent. The prospect of his visit offered an agreeable variety, and she was sure of his sympathy as regarded Miss Bruce's influence with her father.

One sunny afternoon Leah sat in the shadow of her father's house, spinning, and murmuring the

words of a hymn she was accustomed to sing at her meeting-house :—

> "The way was lone, the path was drear,
> Till Jesus walk'd beside them there.
> Oh, Christ! how drear this world would be,
> If our frail feet walk'd not with Thee!"

The world was very drear to Leah then. No shame, however, bowed that innocent face, bending over her spinning-wheel, as does Margaret in Retsch's outline.

Her hair was drawn up to the top of her head, and tied by a ribbon—a wreath of curls falling over the restraining band. She was in her ordinary dress of full petticoats, muslin kerchief, and white apron. As she felt no hope, she had no heart beating to foretell pleasure or pain. The spinning-wheel had belonged to her mother, and was an elaborately-carved one of polished mahogany. As her father caught glimpses of her amongst the trees as he returned home, fifteen years faded from his memory, and he could fancy his dead wife sitting at her usual occupation outside the door, to catch the first glimpse of his return. He had not valued then that deep womanly tenderness. He had married her because she had loved him shyly, but evidently, and he had been proud of possessing a creature so delicate and refined, that he often heard Lord North's guests exclaim, catching glimpses of her through the clustering blossoms that shrouded their windows,

"*That* the gardener's wife! What a lady she seems!" Now, the love she had so vainly craved he lavished on his daughter, but with the ignorant devotion of a child to a young bird, who knows not how to make it happy, nor with what food it should be nourished, and seeing it with ruffled feathers and closing eyes, torments it with efforts to make it swallow that by which it will be destroyed.

But Mr. Preston was absent from home for the day, and Leah was left at peace. The whir of the wheel and the quick movement of her foot prevented a distant sound from reaching her ear. Bobtail, however, gave a hasty growl, and then slept again in the sun. Leah looked at him, and fancied that he was dreaming. Then he started up, with ears erect. There was a sound of a horse's hoofs striking the hard turnpike road at the back of the cottage; the corner was turned, and Sir Edgar passed the house at a sharp trot, not looking towards it, and putting his horse at the fence, leaped into the park. He had not noticed Leah. Ten minutes after, Molly came out and summoned her to tea, but found her leaning over the wheel insensible. She had fainted.

"'Tis the heat, poor dear!" said Molly, placing her head to rest on the bar at the back of the chair. "There's not a breath of air, if you'd give a guinea for it!" and Molly fetched a basinful of water freshly drawn from the well, and sprinkled the cold drops on Leah's brow.

"What is it? Have I been asleep? What a strange place to sleep in!" she said, rising. "I'm rather giddy, Molly. I'll go in."

"Best stay here, miss; 'tis so hot inside. If 'twould please Providence to let the sun go down a little sooner these hot days, 'twould be better for the poor harvest-men. Your father, Miss Leah, is trying to bring round Josiah Vetch, who's got a sun-stroke. Goodman's field will be clear to-morrow, so as to let us have a little gleaning. You will have the house all to yourself, miss, for master is going to Stoneham. I hope you won't want to faint away again. Nobody will want to come to the shop, for they will all be in the gleaning-field. They do say Master Giles has got all the nasty milintary from Colchester to scrog his fields; which will bring a curse upon him, no doubt, from the Lord, for defrauding the poor women of their rights."

"I wish the farmers would take it all," said Leah, "and give the women a compensation."

"I don't know what manner of thing that may be, Miss Leah; but Lord, child! 'tis the fun of it they like. 'Tis the talk with all the neighbours, and the scraping to see who can get most, and not knowing exactly how much it will be. 'Tis that takes away the sense of pain in the back, as they go a-stooping and stooping over the dry fields, the nasty stubble running into their legs, and their petticoats a-tore to ribbons. I'm glad I never married—not I—when I

think of the poor things they leave with old Mother Withers, in the lane, and she's paralytic, and can't attend to them; the piny, whiny babies that cry themselves to sleep, and start up and find themselves in a strange place, and hungry, and cry again fit to break anybody's heart to hear them. Then, when gleaning is once over, there's running to Stoneham with the poor babies to get some doctor's stuff to try to put them right again; and there's summones out agin the women for bad language and fisticuffs when they were a-quarrelling in the field; and, if the husbands don't drop the wheat about where the wives may find it, don't they catch it when they come home! Lor', Miss Leah! don't you go to marry."

"I never shall, Molly."

"Oh! all young girls say so; but, bless you, you can't marry one of them poplar trees, and there ain't no men—only labourers and that like—not good enough for a lady like you."

"I'm not a lady! I wish I were; some gentleman might like me then," said Leah to herself, for Molly had disappeared into the house.

Then she smiled sadly, for she knew there was but one man in the world she would unite herself unto, were she, like pretty Bessie, to have the choice of a court full of gentlemen from whom to select a husband.

At last the soft twilight mists quenched the heat

of the evening breezes, and the glorious harvest moon shone over the yet ungathered sheaves of the abundant harvest. The distant shouts of the reapers were heard, who lingered to do the work beneath the moon which they had rested from during the heat of the day. Their songs died away into silence. The weary retired to their hard-earned sleep. Mr. Preston had prayed his evening prayer with Leah and Molly in their small sitting-room, and the inhabitants of the cottage had retired to rest. Leah slept not: the room seemed to stifle her. She would go down and steal out to walk up and down the chase. He had come to the Holmes, but not for her. It had been agony to see his averted head as he swept past her. He was up there at the Hall. She could see the lights in the bedroom windows gradually dying out one by one. Did he never think of her? There was that witch-like face of her rival gleaming wickedly at her whenever she pulled out her little drawer. Perhaps he had come down to ask for it. "He shall never have it," she said with a gesture of impatience, and at the next moment she began to consider how she should send it back to him. She went out softly, leaving the door partly open. It was a relief to get into the cooler air and breathe more freely. She had taken off her stiff whalebone bodice, and replaced it with a loose jacket; over this she wrapped a thin dark shawl, which fell down almost to her feet, lest any of the neigh-

bouring cottagers might be sleepless also, and, looking out, be alarmed at her ghostly appearance. Arrived in the Chase from her garden, she walked rapidly up and down till she was breathless, and stopped, leaning against a tree. From that point she could see the windows of the Holmes distinctly. There was still a light in that of the room Sir Edgar occupied—if he had his usual bedroom. Of whom could he be thinking? Perhaps he was writing a long letter to Lady Barbara. Of course it could not matter to her whatever might occupy him. Still he ought not to have—— Well, what? Had he not saved her from a frightful death? No one else would have dared that ascent, her father having failed. Of course it was right that he should marry a lady in his own degree. She should never see or hear any more of him, she supposed, when she had once returned that frightful locket. As she speculated with her eyes fixed on the old building, which was bathed in the clear moonlight, her eyes sought the clump of shrubs within which she had hidden herself when she watched her lover and Lady Barbara on her first arrival, because it had commanded the window nearest to it. Suddenly that window was illuminated, and the figure of a man, dark against the light, opened the glass door, and extinguishing the candle, stepped on to the lawn. He began to walk swiftly across it in the direction of Leah's home. Her heart bounded, and then seemed to

stand still for an instant. Then the hot blood rushed through her veins, flushing her cheeks and brow. "Is it he? Is he coming?" She wished—how feeble the word seems to describe the yearnings of her heart to see him again!—to feel the touch of his hand in clasping her own—to hear the tender tones of his voice, which, even in remembering them, made her thrill into transport.

Then came the thought that the pleasure of meeting would be a forbidden one—that even he, incidentally, had spoken of the shame of her being seen with him. She must go in, she thought, but even at the moment she came to that decision, she heard the rustling of the shrubs on the opposite side of the Chase. "Oh! I hope Bobtail will not bark," she thought. Sir Edgar opened the garden gate softly, and stood beneath the cottage windows, looking up. Leah saw him stoop, as if to throw some earth up, and came forward, saying, "Sir Edgar!" in a low tremulous tone. He started, and turning, saw her, and drawing her into the shadow of the trees, he clasped her to his eager breast—his own in every pulse of her throbbing heart.

Sir Edgar kissed away the tears of agitation and pleasure that streamed over her glowing cheeks.

"How could you pass me to-day without a single look?" she said.

"Little goose! half a hundred old women, hearing the tramp of my horse's hoofs, came to their

cottage doors, and I felt, rather than saw, they were watching me, and my Leah's reputation is as dear to me, and dearer, than my own life."

"I never thought of the old dames," said Leah simply; "but you are wiser than I, and I have been breaking my heart to think that you did not care for me."

"Would that break your heart?" asked Edgar with grave tenderness.

"I think so. I think I should die if you ceased to love me. You never will, will you? Swear that you never will."

"I swear!" said the lover, not yet one-and-twenty, who had not yet felt that change in the essence of existence—that love, like a flower, when it has expanded into its perfect beauty, yields most fragrance as it first opens, then hangs like the petals of the rose, more loosely day by day, till the charms vanish one by one, and leave the unsightly pods wrapped in a few shrivelled remnants of former beauty. Fortunately your lovers believe the passion which inspires them will be eternal, and this was the conviction of Sir Edgar and Leah.

He had not the courage to tell her that he was going abroad, and meant that she should accompany him. That should be said at some future interview. He would enjoy the present moment. Of course Leah would go with him; but he needed not

to ask her yet. His influence must be more established.

"Your father is quite well again, is he not, my child?"

"Yes, quite well, and so grateful. He prays for you every night and morning."

Sir Edgar felt he would rather not have had the prayers. It was too dark for Leah to see Sir Edgar's face, even if in her position, with her head reclined on his breast, she could have scanned that countenance, on which the candour of youth still lingered; but she felt uneasy at his silence.

"You do not know how very grateful he is to you. You see, I make all the happiness of his life; and the death, such a death, would have been so dreadful."

"Your father is not an old man. Do you think he will ever marry again? Would it not be a good thing for him to marry?"

"Marry!" said Leah with astonishment. "My father marry! Certainly not."

"But why?"

"In the first place, he disapproves of second marriages; and in the second, his habits of life are so fixed, that a stranger in the house, however agreeable in herself, would be a trouble rather than a blessing. How strange that you should think of the subject, whether my father marries again or not! It must be that you are so thoroughly unselfish, that

you are kindly interested in the fate of those with whom you are not mixed up by ties of blood, or of companionship."

Sir Edgar did not feel that he had deserved this commendation quite, and changed the subject by asking whether Leah would not go with him to the forest retreat, as they called Leah's bower. Leah proposed as an emendation that they should sit down on a fallen tree which lay at the side of the Chase, and out of the moonlight, because it was close to her cottage. She gave no other reason, and Sir Edgar assented to the one she alleged; the true cause being that he had spoken before, unthinking of the effect of his words, as to the impropriety of their meeting, or rather of the observations which would be made on the circumstance should they be seen, and Leah fancied that the publicity of their tryst would deprive malice of its sting.

Sir Edgar felt pretty sure of having it his own way on some future occasion; and it was an intense pleasure to him to sit with his arm round Leah's waist, and know that the heart which he clasped had never felt any loving pressure but his own.

"Leah," he said, "what a little spitfire you were about that locket!" "I may as well get it over," thought he; "she will be sure to think of it when I am gone, otherwise."

Leah was awakened from her fairy-land of love by the reference to that cause of grief and jealousy.

"How could you, loving me, wear the hair of another woman about your neck?"

"My darling, I had no intention of wearing it. You must have perceived it was lying outside my shirt. Had I loved Lady Barbara, I should have put it next my breast."

"Then how came it round your neck at all?"

"Lady Barbara pretends to be very grateful. Nay, she is very grateful to me for saving her life, and she tied the locket round my neck as a proof of her appreciation of my service."

"It was an odd thing for a great lady to do, if she was not convinced that you were very fond of her."

"Ah! my sweet Leah, great ladies do strange things sometimes, and that makes me glad that you are not a great, but a little lady," he said, kissing her fondly.

"I think I had better go," said Leah, rising nervously.

"No; you cannot go yet. I have something to give you. There, don't be such a little fool; sit down by me again. How your heart is beating! Why are you so alarmed?"

"I am not," said Leah, "only—suppose Bobtail should bark."

"He won't bark; besides, no one will hear him if he does. There—I wish you could see this; come into the moonlight for a moment. 'Tis a locket I

mean you to wear in remembrance of me. You can't see how like it is in this cold moonlight, that makes all the colours look grey;" and he took out a locket set round with pearls, containing a miniature of himself on one side, and his hair on the reverse.

"Ah, how beautiful!" said Leah, kissing it fondly. "How good, and noble, and generous you are!"

Sir Edgar began to fancy he was. He had ordered an expensive locket to present to Lady Barbara, but being really very much attached to Leah, as it arrived the night before he left town, the fancy seized him to present it to Leah, and her humble gratitude quite repaid him for the expenditure. "Lady Bab was expecting some return for the diamond locket, but she must wait," he thought.

He fastened it round Leah's white throat by a small chain, and kissed the back of her neck when he had done so.

"Now I had better give you back that other," said the girl.

"I do not care for it. You may pick out the diamonds and sell them, and burn the rest of it, if you please, my darling."

"I could not do that. It would not be right, would it, to Lady Barbara? But it makes me wretched to see it in my drawer. Will you wait here till I fetch it?"

"No. You must not come out again when you

once go in. Stay with me a few minutes longer. It is quite pleasure enough to sit by your side, without speaking a word."

They sat a moment or two longer, and then Leah said she must go. If he came under the window, she would drop Lady Barbara into his hands. She went first, and when she appeared at the window, Sir Edgar went softly under it, and received the locket safely in his outstretched hands.

"'Tis quite as well," said Sir Edgar as he put it into his pocket. "That other woman would make such a disturbance if she thought I had lost it. What a fool I have been about Lady Bab! I had much rather marry Leah. Shall I marry her?" He debated this question all the way back to the Holmes, and fell asleep reiterating the query.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Some melancholy thought that shuns the light
Lurks underneath the sadness of thy visage."

ROWE.

WHEN Leah got back to her bedroom, and had watched the figure of her lover as he crossed the patches of moonlit park, she strove to find Molly's tinder-box, wherewith she might hope to obtain a light, and examine her new treasure; but, after striking the flint on the steel four or five times, she gave up the attempt, lest the sharp sound should awaken the sleepers.

"Never mind," she said, "it will soon be dawn;" and when the first twitter of birds heralded the morning, she sat up in her bed and tried to see, but had to wait another hour before the delicately-handled miniature by Newton, then a rising young painter, was visible in all its truth and artistic relief. The pearls might have attracted any one who knew their value. To Leah they were nothing more than pretty glass beads would have been. It was the face that she valued, and the hair. It is the knowledge that the hair we possess once curled round the beloved head which makes it valuable, for it is very

inferior to the curl that dances in the wind and catches every ray of light, and is always deprived of its gloss and darker in colour when covered and compressed by the glass. The locket was perfect altogether, however, in Leah's estimation, and she fell asleep with it clasped in her hand, and resting on her breast, with her sweet face looking lovelier from the charm of happiness in her smooth brow and half-opened mouth.

Sir Edgar made himself particularly agreeable at the Holmes. Rose was glad of his sympathy with her dislike of her late governess, and he became so attentive to her, when he felt that attention was to be no longer demanded as a right, so useful in giving advice as to the stable arrangements, and had brought so many new books on the treatment of flowers, that Rose felt he was a most agreeable cousin. He had taken some lessons of a clever Frenchman in chess, and proposed to attack Mr. Elliot. That gentleman assented with a sigh, for his recollection of Sir Edgar's play was not complimentary to that youth. They played, and Mr. Elliot was beaten. Mr. Elliot rubbed his eyes, and could scarcely believe that he was awake. An Englishman beaten invariably craves for another opportunity for battle. Mr. Elliot demanded his revenge. Sir Edgar bowed. Miss Bruce, waiting for her turn, was fain to turn away and make some remark to Rose, which that young lady responded to civilly, but with a satirical

smile on her lip, which Miss Bruce well interpreted to be a quiet triumph at her discomfiture. Mr. Elliot played his best; Sir Edgar's moves came down stern and inexorable as fate. It was in vain that Mr. Elliot changed his tactics—that sometimes he opened his game in the usual way, sometimes with the king's gambit; sometimes he played a safe game, and his pieces were hopelessly suffocated by their close proximity; sometimes he played a dashing game, and was checkmated all the sooner.

In two games only he was beaten ingloriously, and that was when the half-past eleven had chimed, and he grew fidgety lest his meeting with Leah should be deferred. Then he explained to Mr. Elliot that he could not see at night, playing with the black men, the difference between the bishops and the queen; and Mr. Elliot, determined not to give him such an excuse, played with him at different times during the day, never winning a game after the change of hours. The change of antagonists was a great point attained. He felt his playing had gone down whilst he was the opponent only of Miss Bruce, and she ceased to become necessary to his amusement.

"Now is your time to unseat your enemy," said Sir Edgar to Rose, when they walked together to the flower-garden one day. "Cannot you suggest to her that she may like to visit some of her friends?"

"I did so," said Rose, "only yesterday, and she told me, with a cunning smile, that she had no friends so dear as those at the Holmes."

"What an insufferable woman! A bright idea! Who orders dinner?"

"I do."

"Then cut off the supplies."

"Do you not see that we should be the sufferers, for she always helps herself to the best slices; and in a couple of fowls, she gives papa one liver-wing, and puts the other on her own plate."

"I really don't see how I can help you further than in the chess."

"Well, if you were to make as violent love to her as you did before Lady Bab's advent, she might leave the chase of papa for the chance of a title."

"I fear," said Sir Edgar, "I could not now do that with a grave face, especially after my devotion to Lady Barbara. Besides," with a sigh, "my time is getting short now. Do you know that I have been here ten days already?"

"And do you sigh at leaving us? If so, why go? We are very glad to have you."

"So, my dear Rose, are other people, if they speak truth. I don't want to be married against my wishes and before my time. I am a perfect infant in the hands of a woman. Why, for heaven's sake, did you not insist on my marrying you? I should have been very grateful after a little; howled and

whined like a dog in a new kennel at first, I dare say, but you would have found me an excellent husband in the long run."

"Then I trust you will prove so to Lady Barbara. You may tell her that I expect to be bridesmaid."

"You shall," said Sir Edgar with a groan, "when the happy event takes place."

The more frequent were his visits to Leah, the more determined he was that she should be his companion to the Continent. He began to drop hints to her that he had been ordered abroad by his guardian for the winter months, and that he was to start early in the autumn.

"Why must you go?" cried Leah in a piteous voice. "Why cannot you be happy in England?"

"The doctors say my chest is delicate," said the wily youth, determined to alarm Leah's fears for his health.

"Are you ill, my dearest?" said she sadly. "I never see you by daylight, but your dear face feels very firm and plump;" and she passed her rosy palm over his cheeks.

> "'He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dare not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all,'"

Sir Edgar had sung as he came across the park—gloomy now, for the moon was not visible. "I must

get Leah to be my companion on the Continent." He had spoken of Italy, of the charm of its climate, of the wealth of its stores of art—of the noble fountains of Rome, giving a sense of coolness to the glowing air—of the glorious mountains, snow-capped and rose-tinted. To all this Leah listened eagerly, but the charm that was most seductive was that of his love and presence. Iceland with him would have been dearer to her than an earthly paradise without him.

Sir Edgar felt, each successive night that he met Leah in the Chase, his influence with her was greater. At length he said—

"Leah, you must come with me."

"I thought," said the girl innocently, "that you could not marry till you are of age."

"No, my darling, I cannot marry you; but you shall be dearer to me than any wife could be. Can you not trust me, my Leah?"

"I do not quite understand," she said in a faint voice. "You mean that you could not marry me till you are of age?"

"No, I could not; but I cannot wait for that. You will come with me. I must go to-morrow night. Think of that, Leah. Think of my going alone, with no one to care for me, no one to nurse me, if I am ill. Ill and wretched I am certain to be."

Leah did not speak. Sir Edgar's arm was round

her, and he felt by the convulsive heaving of her bosom that she was sobbing.

"I cannot be angry with you as I ought, Sir Edgar, for I love you too well; but I know that you ask me to do what is disgraceful. I cannot do it. Oh! do not—do not place me in this frightful extremity! You know how very dear you are to me. I love you better than anything in the world; better than my own life, which you have saved; better than my own soul, which would be perilled by the course you urge. My father——" and here a fresh burst of sobs and tears racked Leah's slender frame.

"Your father's happiness, my darling, shall be cared for. I found out from your unconscious candour the other night, when we were talking, what your father most wished, and that it was for money sufficient to build a chapel. Now, I will give him two thousand pounds to build one, which will suffice also to purchase a bit of land for the purpose, if Mr. Elliot do not present him with it; or I will give him for his life an income of one hundred a year, which will be more than double what he has now to live on. On you, my darling, I need settle nothing; you will be unto me as a wife, and you shall spend my money for me; all I have will be yours."

"If I am to be as your wife," said Leah, "why do you not marry me?"

"Do you wish me to be put in prison, my Leah, for marrying against the consent of the Lord Chancellor?"

"No," replied the girl; "but if you loved me truly you would wait till you were of age."

"It is evident, Leah, that you do not love me as dearly as I love you. You think nothing of the eight months' separation. I may be ill, and die in a foreign land, and when you hear that no kind hand was near to smooth my pillow and close my eyes, you will regret that you were so prudent and thoughtful of your petty proprieties, and left me to go into a foreign land alone."

Leah flung her arms round his neck, and kissed his eyelids and brow. Sir Edgar felt that he was overcoming the weak, but he was bent on victory.

"Think, my child, how happy we have been in the few hours of enjoyment we have stolen from the night. Do you think you can bear the long dreary hours when you will never see me nor hear of me? Will not your usual occupation be distasteful, after being in the company of one who loves you so tenderly, and who so respects your purity and refinement? Will you bear the coarse tones and rough compliments of the clowns who surround you? And remember, if we part now, it will be for ever. People talk of parting and meeting again. They may do so; but they meet without its being the same; a thousand little circumstances keep them

apart. The effort to reunite ends in disappointment. Look at this bit of southernwood—"boys' love" we call it in the west—how well it fits its place on the bush: each little fibrous leaf accommodates itself to its neighbour. I break it off, and place it in the earth thus. It takes root, and grows with a separate existence. It has its own circumference to fill: it is nothing now to its parent tree. Take up either, and try to reunite them; it is no longer possible—each has grown in its own direction. They can never meet again. The effort to make them would end in disappointment."

"It may be so," said Leah sadly, "but I cannot see it now. It is very hard on me to have such a nature, I suppose, or such a stupid head. I cannot imagine any circumstances when you would not be dear and welcome to me. If you say that people long separated cannot be reunited with pleasure to themselves, I believe it, because you say it, but I cannot feel that it would be so. I would strip off all the branches that had grown up to intercept our meeting," she said with a wan smile.

"On your side you might, but I am not sure that I could on mine."

"Then you do not love me," cried the girl passionately.

"I love you well enough to make a serious money sacrifice to please your father, Leah," said Sir Edgar, rather affronted.

"My father! my father!" cried Leah in an excited voice. "How little you know him! You want me to live with you without being your wife —as your mistress—as one to whom our coarse, plain-spoken clowns, whose conversation you believe to be so distasteful to me, would apply a grosser name, but a true one. Do you think that my father would be happy if I were the king's mistress? if I were living like those disgraced ladies of rank who are called the favourites of the prince regent? All my father rejoices in in his life is his unstained integrity—in the purity which makes his teaching forcible, because it comes from an unstained source. Who would drink even of the living waters if the hand that offered the cup was polluted? How could the preacher reprove incontinence in our young men and maidens when his own daughter was shameless as she who sat by the wayside, and took the signet and bracelets as a proof of her dishonour? How could he preach in a chapel that was bought by the wages of sin? The very stones would cry out upon him."

"You use hard sentences, Leah. The world does not now judge by these old-fashioned country notions. I saw a lady who lives in adultery, the day before I left London, whom every one applauded and admired. Nothing was thought of her sin. Perhaps they held the sin excused for the cause of it. You would not be so nice if you loved me.

Women always talk thus when they do not care for a man enough to make any sacrifice for him."

"*You* only propose to give your money," said Leah. "Perhaps I do not value that offer so much as I ought; for till the last few months, when"—and there came a little sob—"when I wanted to look nice, and more like a lady in your eyes, I never wanted any money, or what money could buy." And then Leah thought of old Molly's present of the pair of gloves, which, with her pretty white robe, had been sacrificed in the fire. With the thought of the fire came the rush of gratitude and tenderness for her saviour from it; and she went on with a troubled voice, that sounded as if indecision waited on her words to contradict them by her feelings:—"I may not estimate your sacrifice properly; I know you cannot estimate mine. The offer of your money seems to me a slight thing compared with the hazard of your life to save mine. In return for these marks of devotion, you ask me to sacrifice myself and my father—my honour and his happiness; for, Sir Edgar, I am base enough to be happy with you in the way you propose. I would soil my life in this world, and hazard it in eternity, because I love you! Oh, how dearly! But I cannot bring shame on that venerable head. I cannot leave him bowed down by my iniquity, and for the bread of his life give him a stone."

"Which means nothing more nor less than that

you prefer your father to me," said the lover, much offended. "I have said all I can adduce to alter your resolution. I shall leave you now—probably for ever."

"Oh, not so! not so!" cried Leah, flinging herself into his arms as he rose to leave her. His arms did not support her, so she sank to his knees, and embraced them with a tenacious grasp, that made the blood tingle in his veins. He looked down on her bowed head, graceful even in its dishevelled beauty, and loved her the more for the agony that distorted her hidden face. "One effort more, and she is mine," he argued.

"Rise, Leah!"—and he raised her, she standing all drooping at his side—"you will come with me to-morrow night? I shall stand here at eleven o'clock. The carriage will remain for fifteen minutes in the road. Come down with a few clothes, tied in a bundle. You shall be abundantly supplied at the first place we stop at. Your father will be happy when he knows that you are so. Do not fear for him, my child; do not fear for yourself. Cannot you intrust to me the care of that dear life I snatched from the burning house?"

Leah said nothing, but craved from his lips a parting kiss. Those lips seemed as if they would never separate, for in that kiss there was the concentrated force of grief and passion.

"I must go now," said Edgar. "Look, my

darling, at the sky, and hark! the birds. You *will* meet me to-morrow?"

"God help me!" said the poor girl.

"Give me one more kiss, silly child!" said Sir Edgar; "we shall meet again to-morrow."

He sprang across the gate into the park, and saw, when he looked back, that Leah was leaning against the wall of the cottage weeping. "Dear child! Of course she will cry a little; but she will be so happy with me! I love her so tenderly; I can never love her less. And if she should be too wretched in her new life for want of that respectable tie, I can but marry her. Many men marry their mistresses. If it were not for that infernal woman, I would marry her privately at once. What an intense fool I have been to give her such power over my life! Barbara loves me, though; and to have riveted the love of such a woman, so admired as she is—so wealthy, too, and of high birth—is somewhat of a triumph.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Ah! fly temptation, youth! refrain, refrain,
I preach for ever: but I preach in vain."

Leah returned to her room with slow steps and an aching heart, and tried to forget her trials and perplexities in sleep. The following day was Saturday, and she had to teach the children of the village school to sing the psalm and hymn for the Sabbath. The children could not understand why Miss Leah seemed so cross, nor why her eyes were so red. The discordant notes produced by their ill-matched voices, and the vulgar intonations by which they spoiled words which might have been touching if sung by other lips, irritated poor Leah's ears, attuned as they had been to the melody of her lover's voice.

"Miss Leah, here are master's socks, full of holes at the toes, my dear, and here are the balls of worsted to mend them; that's duty work, Miss Leah. And now for the pleasure. Here's a dozen shirts to make for Farmer Hodgson. Mrs. Hodgson left them yesterday. Says she, 'Mistress Molly, my old eyes can't do the stitching as Miss Leah can.'

And you are to have a shilling each shirt, if you stitch a beautiful heart at the opening of the bosom. Think of that, Miss Leah!—twelve shillings!"

"Oh, Molly! it makes my fingers ache to think of it; and the Irish is so stiff, and will break all the needles so!"

And Leah began to cry, from the physical exhaustion brought on by agitation of the previous night.

"Well, my dear, I'm sure I did not mean to vex you. I thought you would be glad to get a little money to look nice when you go to chapel, or if you should chance to be sent for to go up to the Hall again."

"Certainly; very right, Molly; only, somehow, I don't think I am quite well to-day."

"You do look peaky to be sure. If you would but let me make you a cup of chamomile tea every morning, 'twould get up your appetite wonderful!"

"No; I thank you. Give me papa's socks."

"There, my dear. I wish I could help you; but I should only bodge them."

When Mr. Preston came in for dinner, he craved Leah's sympathy for several cases of illness, and required her aid in preparing sick food for those for whose body he cared whilst he ministered to their spiritual destitution. Then, after the frugal dinner of boiled potatoes and salt, and bread and cheese for those who liked it, which Leah did not, he shut

himself up to study the subject of his Sunday's discourse. This gave her the whole afternoon for her dangerous meditation. She carried the broth made by Molly to one sick woman, left alone to fight against the approaches of death as she could, as her daughters would not give up their gleaning, and the gruel to a dying boy, whose mother and sisters had left him in a similar predicament. It had been a great trial to old Molly not to join the trooping women and children when the church bell tolled them into the gleaning-field at seven o'clock in the morning; but there was a deal to do in cleaning on Saturdays; and, besides that, her master had insisted on the broth and gruel being made.

"I may escape all this, and never have to work more than I like. And oh, my darling! I may live in your sight always! You will always love me! What is my life, that I should hope? What is my end, that I should prolong my life, if it be not spent in your society? How can I put up with existence without that strange new charm that it has had for me since I have known you?"

Then she thought of her life when Sir Edgar should have left her. The same dull routine day after day; the same children to teach; the same poor to visit, and listen to their querulous complaints and their catalogue of bodily ailments, or to the little spites they had to retail of their neighbours; to go and sit on Sundays on the same form,

and see the cobwebs hanging from the same rafters in the roof, and lead the same hymns all the rest of her life. Those duties, at other times so pleasant to her, had now become so dull and distasteful.

"If I go, my father shall find his clothes all in order," she said, and she brought a pile of linen to have buttons sewed on and small holes darned. Then those wearying socks must be mended. "Did she mean to go?" She dared not answer that question to herself, but she calculated mentally what clothes she should include in that little bundle that was to accompany her. How soon it would come now—that hour which would decide all her life! The sun was sinking below the horizon, but it still flung its glad glory between the trunks of the trees in long lines of gold, and tinged with warmth the garden-pales and the fur of the old tortoisshell cat sleeping on the window-seat.

Caleb Preston came in at tea-time happily unconscious of the whirlwind raging in the breast of the tranquil-looking girl, who poured the infusion of rosemary leaves into his cup, and cut his slices of bread and butter with loving precision as to its thinness and quantity. She had put his favourite book, Baxter's "Saints' Rest," at his side, as he usually liked to read at his meals; but this evening he preferred to talk, when silence was a boon Leah would have prayed for had she dared. He was slightly deaf, and not hearing a reply which she had made

to one of his observations, she, when compelled to repeat it, did so in a voice so sharp and bitter in its tone, though the words were simple—the result of the fermentation of anxiety going on in her mind—that Caleb looked up wounded and astonished.

"I cannot help being deaf, my dear," he said. "I beg your pardon for making you repeat your words."

"Oh, father! what a wretch I am to be so cross! Forgive me, my father, all my sins against you. Will you always forgive me, however wicked I may be?"

"Forgive thee, my Leah! Have I not carried thee in my bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, even as the Lord required of Moses for the children of Israel, and dost thou ask forgiveness for a hasty word, for an unmanaged cadence in thy voice? Tut, tut, my silly lamb!"

She kissed him with tearful eyes and sat down. Old Molly stood waiting till the meal should be concluded, and Mr. Preston, feeling that conversation had been ruffled by this little incident, took up his "Saints' Rest;" he read for a few minutes, and then his head became giddy, and the book dropped from his powerless grasp.

"How strange!" he said, stooping to pick it up; "I can't see it."

"Here it is, my father," said Leah, who had hastened to replace it, and who was too ignorant to understand why it had dropped.

"On the table, my dear; I will take it presently," said the father, anxious not to alarm his daughter, but fearing that his hand would refuse to grasp the book that she offered. He had recovered in a few minutes his former power, and with it his usual tranquillity, and Molly alone suspected the truth, and caught Leah's dress as she was following Caleb Preston out of the house.

"Did you see *that*, Miss Leah?"

"What do you mean?"

"About the book, miss."

"Yes; my father dropped it."

"Ah! that was not a natural dropping of it, just from carelessness."

"What then?" said Leah in a worried tone. "You are always having some fancy or other, Molly."

"Well, Miss Leah, I hope 'tis a fancy of mine, but I believe 'twas a stroke. Don't look so pale, my dear. 'Twasn't much, if 'twere one; but that was just the way Goody Wilson was first took, and the doctors said that was a stroke, and sure enough she lost the use of her side afore the year was out. But, Lor' love ye! master may live to an old man and never have another."

Leah sat down speechless under the threatening of this unexpected calamity, and Molly, seeing how much she had been struck by the suspicion, strove to remove the impression of her words.

"You know, my dear, 'twas so little, it might

have been my fancy after all. And master looks quite well in the face—quite a pretty colour in his face, and that is generally white, you know. I really don't believe there was any stroke after all. Very likely the heat of the weather made him feel languid. The heat is dreadful, Miss Leah. Do get your colour up again, my dear. 'Twas nothing, after all!"

And Leah was comforted, and was fain to believe it was nothing; and her thoughts sped onwards to the new life she should spend with her lover, in which her father could have no part. She did not want to go if she could see her lover in those soft hours of the summer night, which they had spent in what seemed to her such innocent enjoyment. She desired nothing more than to hear the assurance of Edgar's love from his lips, and to feel their pressure on her own.

How sad it was that those disagreeable people had ordered him to go abroad! It was such warm weather now; surely he needed not to have gone so soon. And could she consent to his going away alone—to be ill, perhaps, in a foreign country, and have no one to nurse him? Having known him and felt the inestimable blessing of his love, could she willingly give it up, and consent never to see him again? Her love for her father became dim and indistinct in this terrible contest of human feelings. The necessity of loving, of cleaving to one more dear than father and mother, was paramount in her

heart, for the time, over every consideration of filial duty. The old love the young who spring up around them; they cling to them for happiness; they demand sympathy for circumstances of which the young, not having experienced them, can neither know nor care. The young give the old ignorant pity, and if they be gentle, tender commiseration; but *their* happiness is found in the bright, eager faces of their contemporaries—in their coevals, who are swift to suggest and strong to perform new plans of happiness, which to these have the undimmed brightness of novelty.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Come then, my mistress and my wife—for she
Who trusts my honour is the wife for me—
Your slave, your husband, and your friend employ,
In search of pleasures we may all enjoy."

"Oh, my love! my Edgar! I shall soon be with thee for all my life. My father will forgive us both when he finds how happy you have made me. He will bless us when I kneel and ask his pardon as my Edgar's wife. Eight months will soon be over." She counted the months on her fingers as she looked out on the garden, rich with autumnal flowers, and thought that it would be snow-laden before she saw it again, and that her father would have the dreary winter months to pass before they should meet. The money Sir Edgar had talked of giving him she knew he would never take. He would be insulted at the proposal. Her dear Edgar had meant it well, but he did not know the stern, rigid soul of her father. She hoped Edgar would never write on the subject to him.

Caleb Preston came in, and called his daughter and Molly to join him in his evening devotions.

He prayed to his Father in heaven to protect them through the night, that no evil might come near them, nor any plague come nigh their dwellings; that their last waking thoughts might be such that, should death take them in sleep, they might not be ashamed when they were declared before God and man at the resurrection. Then Caleb prayed for Sir Edgar; that he might be surrounded by God's blessings wherever he went, by land or by water; that inasmuch as he had brought light and happiness to Caleb's homestead by the hazard of his life, he might find joy and comfort in his own; that all his undertakings might prosper and be crowned by success; and that when this life terminated he might enjoy eternal happiness in the presence of his Creator.

Leah heard, and felt that her cold lips could not utter amen to such unconscious petitions. Could such an undertaking as Sir Edgar now contemplated be pleasing to the Almighty? Might it not tempt the Lord, if carried out, to torment Sir Edgar with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death? "Oh, my love! will the sin I commit with thee bring divine vengeance on thy head? On me alone—on me alone, just God, let thy wrath descend! On me let thy thunderbolts fall! Sir Edgar leaves no duty unfulfilled, as I do. He has no affectionate father dependent on him for comfort and happiness. I alone deserve punishment, wretch that I am!"

She kissed her father and went to her room. When she thought how grieved her Edgar would be at her tacit refusal to accompany him, she felt as if her heart would break.

"I had rather die! I wish I could die at once, not to have to decide."

She collected a few clothes and tied them up in a shawl. The days were so long that it was late when they retired to their rooms, even in the cottage. She heard the village clock strike ten. "Only an hour and I shall be clasped in those dear arms! Alas, my father!" She waited in silence, with her head resting on her clasped hands, at the window-sill, and hearing only the murmur of the waters flowing from the high ground into the lake.

"It must be half-past now," she thought. "I must see my father once more; when he awakes how wretched he will be not to find me!" She stepped on tip-toe to the door of his chamber, holding the light concealed by her hand from glaring on his closed eyelids. He was sleeping peaceably. She cast her eyes round the room. A medical work was lying open on the table, with a book of prayers between the pages. The medical page was opened at "Paralysis." He, then, was aware of the loss of power by which he was threatened, and had been reading of the premonitory symptoms. Leah turned away with a cold pain in her heart, stricken by the anticipation of his doom.

"So much of death her thought had entertained
As dyed her cheek with pale."

He had known it, then, and, with his usual reticence, had said nothing, lest he should give her anticipated sorrow; and she was going to do that which would strike him with a shame and agony so acute that he would call on death to finish his intolerable suffering, if God so willed it. She left the chamber with trembling steps, for she fancied that other sounds besides those of the waterfall came on the quiet air of night. She went to her bedroom, and leaned her head again on the window-sill. Yes, there was the carriage coming nearer. It would soon reach the point of the road at which it would wait for fifteen minutes. She turned round and saw the bundle prepared for her flight. The carriage had stopped. Edgar was waiting for her to come. "Farewell, my father! my dear, dear father!" She paused, and sank on her knees. "O God! canst Thou pardon my sins? I do love *him* so! I do yearn to be with *him* always"—she meant her lover. She rose up distractedly, and moved towards the door; then, throwing the bundle aside which she had grasped, she went hurriedly into her father's room, and knelt by his bed, kissing him gently, but repeatedly, till she awoke him without startling him.

"Father!" she cried in a hoarse voice, "my father, awake! Dreadful dreams terrify me. The evil spirit, who seeketh whom he shall devour, has

clutched the heart of thy child; put thy arms round me, for I am weak; hold me fast, that I may not be drawn from thy side. Pray that this fearful hour may pass away. Phantoms of sin pursue me, even in this sanctuary of thy arms."

"What is thy trouble, my child? Has he that goeth about in darkness, and is as a lion roaring for his prey, troubled thee in visions, and disquieted thee in dreams?"

"Alas! yes, my father. Hold me tightly clasped in thy arms, and loosen not thy grasp even should I pray to be released."

"Nothing can harm thee here, except by the will of God," said Caleb, who thought she had been terrified by some hideous nightmare; "for He hath said, 'Thou shalt not be afraid of any terror by night.'"

She shuddered as she clung to the bed. She heard a soft voice calling her under the window, "Leah! my Leah!"

"Oh, father! he is come for me," she whispered. "Save me from myself! I must go! I feel the floor sinking—I cannot touch thy hand longer! My Edgar!" she murmured; but her father did not hear the words uttered in a tone of such thrilling tenderness. Leah had ceased to contend: she had for a short space ceased to suffer, for she had fainted.

Her father believed that she slept as she lay stretched across the bed, and scarcely dared to breathe, lest he

should disturb her. Half raised on his arm to look at her, he heard a carriage driving off in the distance, happily ignorant of its connection with his daughter's agitation. She was quiet for some time, too languid to rise. At length she spoke.

"Father! are you awake?"

"Yes, my child."

"Is he gone?"

"Who is gone? Has the evil spirit departed from thee?"

"My father, our evil thoughts are the evil spirits, even as it is written, 'A man's foes are they of his own household.' I will not disturb thy rest longer, my father. Hark! the clock is striking midnight."

She bent and pressed her cold lips on his forehead, and he turned to sleep, of which his wearied brain had need. She went back to her room, and saw the bundle on the floor, and, untying the knots, she tossed the contents into her drawer. She had decided then; she had sacrificed her lover for her father, and she must endure her fate. She looked out on the sky, which had lost its calm beauty, and was darkening with heavy vapour. Leah could not rest on her bed. She wandered out in her thin dress, without a shawl or cloak, and stood in the high road, to listen if she could hear the distant sound of his carriage-wheels—the only thing which now connected him with her. She only felt the chill of the rising wind, and the sweep of the

branches which it hurled against her trembling form. All surrounding objects partook of the dreariness of her present feelings, and seemed to tinge the colour of her future life. She returned to her bed-chamber, and undressed and lay down. She was too much exhausted to weep, too wretched to sleep; so she was still, and watched for the dawn, which came laden with grey clouds, and saw the drops of rain beat against the casement, and then run down the pane in irregular channels. The sun had gone out of her life. September came in, not in his flushed hazel glory, but with his yet unshed foliage wet and whirled by storms. A few labourers only, treading over the sodden plains of stubble, sought the meeting-house, whilst their wives were glad to remain within the shelter of their cottages. On the 1st of September, which was on the Sunday succeeding Sir Edgar's departure, Leah, with heavy lids and languid movements, had watched her father anxiously at breakfast, to see if there were any added symptoms of illness; but she perceived none. He was tranquil, and evidently full of thought on the subject of his coming discourse. He, on the other hand, had observed her expression of dejection, and attributed it to the exhaustion of a restless night. She insisted on following him to the meeting, notwithstanding the driving rain. She had sacrificed so much for him. She dreaded lest he should be stricken by sudden illness during the service; but the attack

had seemingly passed away; probably the change from intense heat to cold and stormy weather distanced the lurking evil; and Leah, relieved from the anxiety, gave herself up to the contemplation of her unhappy love. She told herself again and again that the tie was severed for ever. Did she nourish a latent expectation that her lover would return to her? Who can tell? None know when they cease to hope. They tell themselves that hope is dead, and know it not till the astounding agony is forced on them that hope has really expired.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"How vice and virtue in the soul contend,
How widely differ, yet how nearly blend!
What various passions war on either part,
And now conform, now melt the eager heart!"

CRABBE.

OCTOBER brought gleams of sunshine, that flickered over the red and yellow leaves which the storms of the equinox had left; but by far the greater number lay in heaps in the hedgerows, and cumbered the seat in the forest sanctuary, which love had made holy in the estimation of Leah. She went on in her routine of duties, sometimes tranquil, sometimes scarcely repressing the intolerable irritation of her brain; but tender and attentive to her father, who could not have added a drop to the cup of his love, full almost to overflowing, had he known the struggle in her mind, in which he had been unconsciously victorious.

She had one secret consolation, which was like the daily poison consumed by the inveterate drunkard—a comfort which undermined her very existence. The face of her lover looked out upon her from the circlet of pearls, in its bright loving

smile—a smile which seemed so frank and true, that poor Leah thought it betokened constancy. That was hers, however; no one could take from her the pleasure of its possession, nor the memory of the tender caresses with which it had been given.

"Ye have the poor always with you," was a fact continually impressed by life on Leah, and, though Caleb Preston had but little to bestow, the occasional treat of a quarter of a pound of fresh butter had to be given up, when the sick or infirm needed the sixpence which would have purchased it. It was a matter of indifference to Leah whether she ate the bread with or without that small luxury; but she sometimes wished for money, to expend it for her father's comfort. The twelve shirts were made and paid for at a shilling each, the heart having been elaborately stitched into the opening at the bosom. But Leah had not cared to put a new ribbon on her straw bonnet, but continued to wear her faded one of blue, turned to a dirty yellow by the sun and rain. She wore her clothes neatly put on, and as clean as ever—a point old Molly took charge of—but she cared no longer to look in her small looking-glass when she was preparing for chapel, and noticed not how pale and thin the sweet face had become.

At the Holmes, Rose's only amusement was to watch the progress of the rebuilding the wing which had been destroyed by fire.

Now that Sir Edgar had departed, Miss Bruce

had reseated herself in the chair by the chess-board, left vacant by his absence, and her influence seemed more assured than ever. The lawyer's letters to the indolent master of the Holmes became more and more urgent, that search should be instituted for the missing title-deed, in the absence of which the valuable landed estates would pass away to the possession of the new claimant. After half an hour given to unprofitable meditation on the receipt of each fresh letter, Mr. Elliot would return to the involvements of his knights and bishops, and strove to improve himself in his play, that he might beat Sir Edgar on his return from the Continent.

To the Continent Sir Edgar had not gone. He had no inclination to be shut up in a French prison, by plunging into the still seething caldron of Parisian society, where the name of Englishman might, according to the caprice of some ruling power dressed in a little brief authority, bring him either favour or distrust. He went to Bath, and amused himself in that beautiful city, till he saw in the library the names of Lady Barbara and her aunt, Lady Coverdale, when he thought that his constitution required the more bracing air of Scotland, and where, by continual travelling, he hoped to distance his pursuers.

His feelings towards Leah were those of anger and disappointment. She had truly said that he could not estimate the immensity of the sacrifice he

had demanded of her. He only argued thus: "Had she loved me better than her father and her reputation, she would not have left me waiting like a beggar at her cottage door for half an hour, in the hope that she would come; and I stood there under the window calling her! She might have come down to say good-bye. She must have heard me. Pshaw! I dare say she had curled herself round and gone to sleep like a dormouse; and I, poor fool, so fond of her! Well, she was a lovely girl. I hope she will find some good fellow to make her happy. It is evident that she did not care for me." So Leah came to be dismissed from his thoughts, occupied now by fresh scenes, and by all the distractions which offer themselves to the mind of a youth, handsome, high-spirited, and within a few months of his majority, when he would be the possessor of a clear ten thousand a year.

November came, heralded by rain and snow, and all the dreary circumstances of early winter. Perth Preston lived happily with the old schoolmaster in occupations which accorded well with his tastes, and in which a constant interest was kept up by the mutual sympathy of master and pupil.

"It seems to me, Preston," the old man would say, "a proof that by some means, at present unknown to our limited senses, we must gain in some future state by the knowledge acquired in this world; otherwise, why should I, tottering on the

threshold of the grave, rejoice in storing my memory with the intricacies of a language which, save in the delight of picking them up, are as useless as the pebbles which the child collects on the seashore? We are told that in the great ocean to which I am journeying there is neither knowledge nor device. 'Lo! that night is desolate; no joyous voice cometh therein.' It may be, my son, that your fate may take you to those arid sands, swept over by dusky tribes whose speech to you will not be unknown. You may see the silken curtains agitated by the graceful maidens concealed within their litters, borne away by the swift steps of the camel, and hidden too soon by the rising mists which deceive as does a false love, as Lebin sings. For me, his last words are most appropriate—

'I go to enjoy the novelty of death.'"

Then Perth's honest face would be troubled. The friendship between the youth and the old man was the strongest attachment, setting aside his love for Leah, that the boy had ever known. His mind had expanded in the congenial atmosphere of the old schoolmaster's house. The intense desire of acquiring mental distinction, which had driven him from his father's home, had procured for him indulgence and consideration in the dwelling of a stranger. He forgot his desire for seeing new countries in the happiness of his present vocation, like the Vir-

ginian chief who spent his hours in examining the beauty of a lock, and in turning the key, without thinking to what fresh objects the door which it fastened would conduct him. His master had given him an Arabic dictionary, and "Specimens of Arabian Poetry," by Carlyle, professor of Arabic at Cambridge. This new work was cumbrous, and Perth committed to memory some of the specimens, and transcribed others, taking small heed of the translations by the English poet. His master used to quote the lines of Goldsmith, and apply them to his scholars and Perth—

> "And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
> That one small head should cover all he knew."

His knowledge of Greek and Latin was good, and his acquirements in Arabic and Hebrew respectable. Each day he added some stones, even if but pebbles in size, to the mental structure which, like the pyramids, must have obtained height and importance by small additions of well-concocted materials. His master took care that nothing was learnt amiss. If the eager runner passed what it was good that he should have noticed, a warning voice made him retrace his steps and proceed with more care.

The days had come now to this kind-hearted man when he had no pleasure in them. The cunning machinery of his brain gave way gently and by degrees. One day he sent for Perth, and told him

that he was too ill to rise. Perth brought him his cup of coffee with trembling hands, and begged to go for the doctor who attended the boys.

"'Tis useless, my son. No one can remedy the exhaustion of age. As the Sultan Mowiah says, 'I am as corn to be reaped.'"

He was still for some time, and seemed to be engaged in prayer. Then his mind wandered, and he called the boys by name to their class, believing them to be present. "No, young gentleman," he said with great politeness, "you have not given the true reading of that passage. Just listen to the right interpretation;" and he smoothed the sheet as it were an open volume, and repeated, first in Greek and then in English—

> "'My clear sight
> Looks through the future; unforeseen no ill
> Shall come on me; behoves me, then, to bear
> Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain
> To struggle with necessity's strong power;
> But to complain, or not complain, alike
> Is unavailing.'"

Having uttered, with great pathos, this fine passage from Æschylus, he lay back exhausted, saying, "Night is closing round, gentlemen. The class is dismissed." These were his last audible expressions.

Perth sat by his side, holding the withered hand with reverent love, till the last breath quivered over the pale lips which had never been moved but in words of wisdom and kindness towards the unhappy

young man who, in losing him, had lost his only friend.

The old master had frequently said, "Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I give unto thee—wisdom and learning, more precious than gold; yea, than much fine gold."

A grasping kinsman came to gather the few goods of which the old man had died possessed. He was just, however, if not generous, and paid the servants the wages to which they were entitled, and a month in advance. They were permitted to remain till after the funeral; and most of the tears which were shed on the schoolmaster's grave fell from the eyes of his servant-boy, usher, and pupil, Perth Preston. The weather was bitterly cold, and from the dull grey sky a few flakes of snow were falling. The mourners dispersed to their different homes—all but Perth, whom the schoolmaster's death had left homeless.

Perth had but little money. The old man had not possessed much power of repaying his services, and Perth had bought himself a good suit of clothes, besides the fustian jacket and trousers which made his usual gear, out of the wages his master had given him. His idea was to travel down, in the cheapest manner consistent with due care of his garments, to some seaport. He had never seen the sea, and besides the natural curiosity to behold a spectacle which his fancy painted as so sublime, he felt that

it would be to him the stile over which he must pass ere he reached his Elysium, the shores of Greece. His hope, which scarcely amounted to expectation, was to get a passage on board some outward-bound vessel. His perfect ignorance of all matters connected with the sea made this very problematical, for who would take a land-lubber, who knew not even how to climb up a ship's side? It is well sometimes that the eyes fixed on a distant goal take no notice of intervening obstacles. Had Perth anticipated those which would have beset his path, he might have sat down discouraged, without making any forward steps.

Futurity is hid in mercy from our sight. Who, could they anticipate at twenty the sorrows which would mark their destiny before threescore and ten were reached, would not turn their eyes from the light of day with despair? Perth was but twenty, and full of the hope that springs from youth and a sound constitution. Before he started on his journey, he went to the house of the widowed mother of the little boy whom he had first known amongst the scholars of his late master. His small friend saw him pass the window, and running out, seized his hand with a cordial pressure, and brought him into the room where his mother was working. Perth made his bow, and then preferred his request, which was a modest one. He wished to leave his few books in the care of his friend's mother. When he

must walk great part of the way, grammars and dictionaries were weighty matters. The widow, probably relieved that no more was required of her, assented willingly, and put the volumes up in her little shelf, where he could have them, she observed, whenever he came back.

Perth looked at them with a sigh. They were the only friends he had now left in his native land. He had paid dearly for their possession, and loved all their little defects as tenderly as the Frenchman did those of his mistress, which he had been acquainted with as long as he had with his own. Then he took up his lightened bundle, and, shaking hands with the widow and her son, he went on his way in the direction of Portsmouth, where he had learnt from one of the public papers the brig *Lavinia* was fitting out to take despatches to Sir Ralph Abercrombie at Malta. He had formed no definite plan of proceeding. He had a little money, enough to pay for a lift in a cart or waggon when he was too weary to continue his travels on foot, and sometimes to get a ride on the outside of a mail-coach. When he arrived at Portsmouth he should see the ocean. Perhaps he might get employment on board some vessel; at any event, young men healthy, well formed, and active were sure to be of use when so many were killed off yearly.

It was a bright frosty morning when he stood on the shingles, which glistened with the retiring waves,

on the beach at Portsmouth. He saw the sea, but it was calm, and he was, in truth, a little disappointed. There had been an oil-painting of a shipwreck at the Holmes, which he had observed when he stood on the ladder to nail up the pomegranate, where the waves were dark in colour and gigantic in size. In reality he found them bright and innocent-looking.

"Is the *Lavinia* in sight?" said Perth, distracted by the quantity of unknown vessels before him.

"There she is, and this is her long-boat now pulling in." Perth stood by and saw a careworn man landed. "That is the captain's steward," said the old sailor who was Perth's informant. The steward went on his way into the town, and Perth sauntered after him. Perhaps he might have an opportunity of speaking to him before he returned to the vessel; though, as a rule, it never does to address a busy person eager to carry out his own plans. Fortune, however, was favourable to Perth. The steward had ordered all the large packages he had purchased to be carried to the boat by the shopmen or errand-boys, but he had several small parcels which he desired not to lose sight of, and these he took in his hand and under his arms. The snow had melted and frozen again, and the pavement was slippery; consequently, the steward slipped, and, from his being overweighted and incapable of

balancing himself by the use of his arms, he fell forward on his nose, amidst the laughter and shouts of a crowd of idle boys who were forming a snow-ball in the centre of the street. Perth assisted him to rise, but the parcels had flown out of his grasp, and his enemies, the street urchins, made frantic grabs at them as they rolled along the pavement. Perth administered a box on the ear to one, and a well-timed kick to another, and, repossessing himself of the vanishing treasures, asked permission to carry them down to the boat for the steward, who was looking ruefully at his wounded hands, excoriated by the rough ice on which he had fallen. He cast his eyes on Perth's face, ruddy in tint, with light, close-curling hair, and a look of peculiar frankness in his honest countenance, and accepted the offer.

As they walked down together to the boat, Perth ventured to ask timidly if the steward thought any employment could be found on board the *Lavinia* for which he might be suited.

"You are rather old, and rather tall, for a cabin-boy," his new acquaintance said. "Do you know aught of the working of a vessel?"

Perth answered "No" promptly, on the principle that when a disagreeable confession has to be made, the sooner it is over the better.

"I fear you would be of no use," said the steward. "You see, young fellows not used to the sea lie

about for days, a misery to themselves and in everybody's way."

"I would do all in my power to be useful to you, sir," said Perth, "if you could kindly get me on board in some capacity."

"Very well! be on the look-out here to-morrow. I'll speak to the captain, and see if it can be managed," said the steward, grateful for getting his parcels safely stowed into the boat without any trouble to himself.

In the evening of the following day Perth accompanied his new friend back to the *Lavinia*, and entered on his duties of being generally useful. Fortune, or rather Nature, had befriended him in a manner very conducive to his own comfort. He was not sea-sick, and waited on the officers who were not so fortunately constituted. To be tossed about beyond the power of volition, to be cramped for want of space, and to feel generally suffocated for want of fresh air, unless on the deck, where he was seldom permitted to remain, Perth found to be exceedingly unpleasant; and he rejoiced greatly when the place of their destination gleamed high above the waves, the white ascent of Malta. Perth, who had been so eager to go on board the *Lavinia*, was now equally eager to be landed. Luckily, the steward ordered him to attend him when he went on the following day to purchase fresh provisions. Then Perth for the first time felt the pleasure of travelling,

and of using, timidly at first, but with more assurance as he went on, the knowledge he had acquired at Bow.

The steward, by aid of signs, was trying to bargain for the purchase of some lemons, citrons, and dried figs. Whilst he was examining the purchase he wished to make, a man standing near uttered a few words of Maltese, in which Arabic was so intermixed that Perth understood him to say, that if he had time to bring his goods from the interior, he could supply much better fruit at the same price as was demanded by the stall-keeper with whom the steward was in treaty. Perth asked him in a few hesitating Arabic words if he had understood rightly, and was satisfied by the answer that his impression was correct. A difference of opinion now took place. The steward wished the owner to bring his fruit to Valetta, that he might see it before he bought a large quantity; the man urging him to come up some miles into the country, where the articles might be examined without his having the trouble of bringing and taking them back if not approved. The steward had no fancy for going into unknown habitations, which might contain those who were enemies to the English, whose authority had been re-established only about eighteen months. Perth, eager for exploration, begged leave of the steward to accompany the dealer inland, and to be allowed to purchase or not, according to his own opinion of the value of the

articles offered. The steward consented. If Perth came to mischief, he was but a cabin-boy; if he managed well, it might be very advantageous to his patron. So he dismissed him much with the feeling which prompts a sportsman to send a valueless retriever into a wood. If he brought out a bird, it was well; but if he was caught in a snare, it was but of little consequence—the dog was not worth much.

Perth came back to meet the boat, a successful purchaser of fruits at a cheaper rate than the steward could have obtained them. The man was pleased by a transaction which enabled him to make a handsome percentage on what he provided for the ship's company. More stores of various kinds were required, and Perth, who preferred *terra firma* to the swaying movement of the ship, and who eagerly caught at every opportunity of improving his knowledge of language, proposed that he should remain on shore till the *Lavinia* sailed, for the purpose of supplying her with fresh fruit and vegetables daily. The steward assented, and Perth delighted in spending his time amongst the lower class of Maltese, who spoke a language utterly distinct from that of the higher orders, whose intercourse was carried on in Italian and French.

Perth, always alert, recognised words which seemed to have been dropped into the current language by the various possessors of the island,

from the earliest occupation by the Phœnicians to the latest by the French. The inhabitants were as various as the languages. His senses were delighted by the sight of the vessels of different nations which gleamed white on the bosom of the deep blue sea. Against the cloudless sky of light azure the long-haired Sclavonian showed gaudily in his crimson cap and flowing petticoats, making a pleasant contrast to the grave-looking and turbaned Turk, who moved awkwardly in his cumbrous trousers. The dark-eyed Maltese girls gleamed quick glances at the fair-haired stranger from the black draperies which coquettishly covered their heads, doing duty sometimes as a veil, sometimes as an apron. For some days Perth was in a whirl of delightful occupation. If he purchased articles of commerce from the men, he found time to assist the women in picking the fruits and vegetables, and packing them ready for transportation to the vessel. The *Lavinia* was better supplied than any ship on the station, and the steward was praised for labours not his own. The time approached, however, when black eyes were dimmed by tears, and Perth's departure made sadness amongst the graceful women who had petted the good-natured, handsome English youth. Perth felt his value pleasantly for the first time in his life; but charming as had been his residence in this island, so replete with natural beauties and hallowed by the magnificence of the

churchman and the valour of the warrior, he wished not to spend his youth in myrtle bowers when manly deeds were contemplated. His breast thrilled with transport on hearing that the *Lavinia*, having delivered her despatches, was to proceed with the rest of the fleet to Egypt with Sir Ralph Abercrombie, to carry out hostile measures against the French at Alexandria.

CHAPTER XL.

"A wise man is strong: yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength."—*Proverb.*

On the 27th of December, 1800, the fleet arrived in Marmorice Bay, and cast anchor. The vessels, driven about by adverse winds, and unable to anchor at Rhodes, seemed to have wandered, Heaven directed, to this large natural harbour, in which the narrow inlet once passed, all was peace. Cramped by want of space on board their ship, exhausted by sea-sickness, and loathing the salt provision, the surprise and pleasure of the soldiers were unbounded when they found themselves suddenly sheltered by magnificent mountains, which were reflected in the bosom of the tranquil ocean, and within reach of luxurious vegetation and luscious fruits. The ships, which had been labouring in a heavy gale of wind and rolling in a tremendous sea, were suddenly becalmed and obliged to be towed up the harbour by the boats of the fleet. A camp was speedily formed inland, whither the sick were transported, and our hero, making himself useful in attention to their requirements, again was sent on shore, where he remained

during the five weeks in which Sir Ralph was waiting for the arrival of a flotilla of gunboats from Turkey and a supply of horses for the cavalry. Each day the hope of this assistance grew less in the opinion of the veteran warrior, and each day immediate action seemed more imperative. The numbers of the French troops were found to be far greater than had been stated, and in every succeeding hour their fortifications were strengthened, and their confidence confirmed.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Ramble afield to brooks and bowers,
To pick up sentiments and flowers."

Not far from the coast of Marmorice Bay, which is singularly bold and beautiful, the mountains rise in lofty peaks, and are wooded with trees of enormous growth and majestic form and proportion. Innumerable streams force their way to the sea, breaking through rocky fissures and falling in repeated cascades from the mountain side, diffusing a grateful coolness and colouring the foliage with a vivid green. Bright flowers perfumed the air, and luxuriant creepers clothed the trunks and branches of the giant trees. A few houses at long intervals, possessed by the Turks, occupied the east of the bay, whilst in the sheltered nooks a few families of hardy and industrious Greek shepherds had built their hamlets, pasturing their flocks in the fertile uplands during the summer heat. The forests, nourished by exhalations and rains engendered by a large expanse of water, form a belt of great length along that tranquil recess of the Mediterranean Sea.

Those on board who had suffered from sea-sickness

were glad to avail themselves of the shelter of tents, where they might recruit their strength and enjoy the unusual luxuries afforded them by the climate and its produce.

One morning, when the sick were being landed, Perth saw a boat coming in with two females, who were borne helplessly along the beach to one of the largest tents. He observed them with some curiosity, for from their attire they were evidently English, and of the better class of society. Shortly after they were concealed by the snowy draperies of the tent, the officer who had accompanied them told one of the sailors who had helped to carry the fair incapables to see for some one to procure melons and goat's milk for the ladies.

"Please your honour," said Jack, "I can't understand the lingo of these foreigners."

Perth had found some difficulty in understanding modern Greek by the aid of his school studies, but he stepped forward and offered his services, feeling the comfortable conviction that if he knew but little, no one else was likely to be better informed.

"Let me see the messenger," said a voice from the tent at once feeble and sharp.

The officer held back the drapery of the tent door, and revealed the forms of Lady Bab and Bell reclining on some cushions and bundles of shawls—her ladyship paler even and plainer than usual, and Bell looking sick and sorry, with her head on her

knees and her arms clasped round them. The maid's head was still giddy with the motion of the vessel in which, though they had occupied the admiral's cabin, they had been so tempest-tossed. Indeed, Bell had recently irritated her mistress by asking whether there was an earthquake going on, as the ground on which she sat heaved up and down so incessantly.

"Young man," said Lady Bab imperiously, looking at Perth, "you must go and get a goat, because I want milk. It must be brought to the door of the tent, and milked into this silver goblet, for I cannot drink anything that has been carried about in those dirty-looking skins. Also I want melons, grapes, and figs."

As Perth listened he was making his own observations on the pair, and a flood of recollections of home—not all agreeable ones—flushed his face. He had seen one lady on the arm of his ancient enemy, Sir Edgar, on the *fête*-day, and had observed the maid in the height of her hilarity, when dancing a reel with her two adorers on the turf at the Holmes. Since that time he had lived, it seemed to him, a thousand years in information and age, though, reduced to figures, the period was but a few months. Then he had been ragged in appearance and starving; now, by his own exertions, he was respectably clothed, and instead of wanting food himself, he was occupied in procuring it for others.

Lady Barbara saw the flush, and set it down to the power of her own charms. The slight awkwardness which Perth had felt from the floating notion that he should be recognised faded from his manner, and was succeeded by a quiet smile at the idea that her ladyship should have ever noticed him, even had he passed the sphere of her vision. The same might apply to the maid, and as it is ill-talk between a full man and a fasting, no recognition was likely to have taken place at the Holmes between a damsel in the exuberant fulness of good wine and good spirits, and a youth reduced to the utmost state of depression from the want of all these incitements to happiness.

He spoke at length, and proposed that he should take the silver goblet and get it filled from one of the distant villages, as he doubted the willingness of the peasants to bring their goats so far, when they were probably ignorant as to the intentions of their invaders, and might fear that the animals would be confiscated. Lady Bab was sadly perplexed by this proposition. She did not know Perth, and the officer had departed, and she thought that confiscation was more likely to be the fate of the silver goblet at the hands of Perth than of the goats at the hands of the sailors. She had not the courage to state her suspicions to the candid-looking youth, who was, moreover, remarkably handsome; so she said that she would give up the goat's milk if she could

get some fruit, and Perth left her to carry out her wishes.

"'Tis very sad, Bell," said Lady Barbara.

"Yes, my lady?" interrogatively, and in a sick voice.

"'Tis very sad, I say," the lady repeated angrily, "that though I joined my uncle, Lord Meith, on board the admiral's ship, just before he left Malta, I have not seen a gentleman I care about ever since I came on board."

"Well, my lady! you see, I dare say Sir Edgar was sea-sick, and we have been so tossed about, that no boats could go between the vessels without a chance of their being swamped, the sailors told me; and I dare say Sir Edgar don't know the agreeable surprise that's waiting for him."

"Ah!" said Lady Bab sentimentally, "no sufferings I have undergone from the frightful pitching of that dreadful vessel, which it makes my head giddy to think of, can equal the risk of his life to save mine."

"How delighted Sir Edgar will be when he hears that you have followed him!" said Bell, rather spitefully, for the efforts the lover had made to escape were evident to the maid, whose vision was not obscured, with regard to her mistress, by the fumes of vanity.

"Don't say such a dreadful word as *follows*. I did not follow him—a sea voyage was recommended

for my health; and my uncle, Lord Meith, could not refuse his cabin for my use, when travelling on the Continent is so dangerous, from its unsettled state."

"I don't suppose your ladyship would have followed the doctor's advice, had you not known that Sir Edgar was on board his cousin's ship."

"Be that as it may," said the lady, "I think 'tis very hard that I cannot tell whether he is coming on shore yet, or not, nor where Sir John Moore may be."

"Your ladyship had better tell that young man to go and look, when he has brought us the fruit," suggested Bell. "I would go myself, but my head is so giddy that I can't stand; besides, women (with a simper) are so scarce, and so much sought after, that—that I might be run away with;" and Bell attempted to blush.

"If your head is giddy you can't go; but I should think you might be safe enough, whatever dearth of women there might be," said the mistress contemptuously.

Bell muttered something, which she was too cowardly to utter aloud, and which her mistress heard, but did not attend to, for Perth had returned with the fruits Lady Bab had asked for, and which she began to devour at once.

"Young man! what is your name?"

"Perth."

"Well, Mr. Perth, can you tell me if Sir John Moore is come on shore yet?"

"Yes, madam. I helped to pitch his tent yesterday; and I believe he came in last evening."

"Ahem! do you think he is aware that I am here?"

"Probably not, my lady. I do not think any one knew your ladyship sailed in the fleet."

"Ah! I told my uncle to keep it secret, that it might come as a charming surprise to Sir Edgar South, my affianced husband."

Perth bowed.

"Do you know where Sir Edgar's tent is pitched?"

"No; but I will inquire and bring your ladyship word."

"Go, then!" and Lady Barbara dismissed him with the grace of a queen.

Perth returned to tell her that the distance was a mile and a quarter.

"Then go and tell him I am here."

"Pardon me, madam! I have duties to perform; but if you will wait till evening I will do your bidding."

Bell, who had been regarding the youth with admiring eyes, stated her opinion that by the evening she should be sufficiently recovered to walk by Mr. Perth's side, and, if he would accompany her, she could give any message from her lady to Sir Edgar. Perth agreed good-naturedly, though he by no means admired his proposed companion.

Mrs. Bell, however, felt her spirits revive at the anticipation of an agreeable walk, and at the escape it promised for an hour from the company of her mistress. She spent the intervening time in trying to coax into shape one of the ugliest of bonnets, called "cottage," which had, unfortunately, been squeezed flat in the boat, when Mrs. Bell had put it down on the seat during an access of sea-sickness, on which one of the sailors had seated himself, disregarding the fragile material.

As she walked by his side, having possessed herself of his arm, much to his embarrassment, she began to deplore her unhappy fortune in having to be the companion, she did not say the servant, of a lady so fanciful and selfish as Lady Barbara. Perth answered with the good-nature which is the groundwork of all politeness, which encouraged her to grumble at the determination of her mistress to take the voyage in her uncle's ship, which she called "right down forward." She would not have done such a thing, even if she loved a man ever so! Perth asked if the attachment was reciprocal.

"Well! certainly Sir Edgar did hazard his life to save her ladyship from the fire at the Holmes."

"A fire at the Holmes!"

"Yes; do you know that part of the country?"

"Yes, I have been there."

"Then you know the old towers? One of them, where my mistress slept, took fire."

"What set it on fire?" said Perth, who was never satisfied till he had become acquainted with every circumstance, from "the egg to the apple."

"Oh! there was a dreadful storm; the lightning did it."

"Was it on the 15th of June?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Because I was out in a thunder-storm at the time."

"Well! my mistress was asleep; I suppose she had hampered the lock of the door, and could not get out, and Sir Edgar went up over the smoking staircase, and broke the door open, and brought her down wrapped up in a blanket."

"Then he must be very fond of her," said Perth carelessly; "but where were you? I suppose when the door was broken open you ran down after them."

"No-o," said the lady's-maid, "the truth was that I had a holiday that night, and I got a young needlewoman to take my place, Leah Preston."

Perth stood still suddenly, and looked Bell in the face with eyes that hungered for information, and a face blanched with terror.

"Any lives lost?" he said hoarsely.

"No, thanks to Sir Edgar! And, you see, that makes me think it wasn't love for my lady, but humanity, for Sir Edgar did more to save the young girl than he did for my lady."

"Then she was saved?"

"Oh yes! she was saved. You see Sir Edgar knew nothing about her, and cared nothing about her; but he heard there were two up there, and when he had brought down my lady, he went up again for Leah Preston."

"What! up the smoking staircase?"

"Bless you, no! that came crashing in after he came down with my lady in his arms."

"How did he get up, then?"

"He got up on the ladder."

"No, that he could not, for it was too short," said Perth, thrown off his guard by his eagerness.

"How do you know that?"

"I have seen the old place, and I know they don't make ladders long enough to reach the top, unless they were tied together, and then, when folks are flurried, it is not easy to fix them."

"Well, he went part of the way on the ladder, and then he climbed up by the leaden pipe. I saw him, as much as the smoke round him would let me; sometimes a jet of fire came out, and then he could be seen, and sometimes the breeze blew aside the smoke. He must have looked like a sweep when he came down," was her feminine thought and expression, for women always think of appearances.

"But about the young woman. When he got up, what did they do?"

"Oh! there was a door that he knew of, which

took them up to the top of the tower. When the folks saw him bring her out at the top, they cheered and shouted like mad people."

"How did they get down?"

"Well, they got down at the back by sheets, 'twas said, but no one could see them at the front of the house. I think Miss Rose gave the young woman a suit of her clothes, to make up for what was burnt. My lady ought to have done it, by rights, but she was obliged to go to Miss Rose too."

"And did you go to Miss Rose also?"

"No, my boxes were in the servants' rooms, in another part of the house, luckily for me."

Perth meditated in silence. He remembered the gentle arm that had raised his head, and the soft white hand that had held the wine to his lips. "Hungry and ye fed me, naked and ye clothed me," he repeated. He had never forgotten his former dislike to Sir Edgar, but now his breast glowed with gratitude for the benefit he had conferred on Leah—an act so purely disinterested, it would seem. How strangely he had received news from home by this unexpected source! and in the hope of some further information, he listened more patiently to the prattle of his companion. She knew no more, however, seemingly, and Perth was glad when they reached the opening of Sir Edgar's tent.

"Stand back a moment, Mrs. Bell, that I may see if Sir Edgar is fit to receive a lady;" and with

that salve to her pride, Bell stood back sufficiently far to be out of ear-shot. "May I come in, Sir Edgar?"

"Come in, in the devil's name, if you like," was the reply; and Perth stood by the side of the young man, who was lying sick and surly on his camp-bed.

They looked at each other in silence for a moment —Perth with his features softened, and beaming tenderly with a sense of inexpressible gratitude— Sir Edgar troubled by some, to him, inexplicable puzzle of a likeness to some one in the face before him; in which, however, the difference was so great, that the image of Leah was not presented to his mind. Perth spoke with a smile at length.

"I am the messenger of glad tidings to you, Sir Edgar. I am but a Mercury, it is true, but an Iris waits outside your tent with a message from the Vera Dea, who borrowed her for the occasion from Juno, no doubt."

"Speak intelligibly, my friend," said Sir Edgar in an irritated tone. "When a man is racked by sea-sickness, he is not in a state to be worried by the Greek mythology."

"Then, in plain terms, Lady Barbara Westeura is in a tent about a mile distant, and has sent her maid, Mrs. Bell, with a message to you, Sir Edgar."

"Lady Barbara here!" said the youth, with a start of surprise which was not one of pleasure, "and that cursed lump of affectation, Bell!"

"Just so," replied Perth, with an irrepressible smile of roguery at all that was implied in the assent. "Shall I tell her to come in?"

"Good heavens, no! How can I see a woman with a five days' growth of beard on my face? She must not come in."

Perth was about to say that he did not perceive beard enough to alter Sir Edgar's appearance, but he knew young men to be touchy on such points, and was wisely silent.

"You must tell her that I am not well enough to see her. Good heavens! what could induce Lady Barbara to come so very much out of her way?"

"Mrs. Bell told me that a sea-voyage was ordered by the doctor, for the restoration of her ladyship's health," said Perth.

"Those venal doctors will say anything," rejoined Sir Edgar, with a vivid recollection of his own excuse to Lady Bab for leaving her. "Go back, and say I am very ill, and that I will pay my respects to her ladyship so soon as I am better."

"Could you not send some other message, Sir Edgar? With the feeling which prompted the voyage on the part of her ladyship, I think your message will bring both women to your bed-side before another hour is over."

"Good heavens! say I am sickening of small-pox. No, Lady Bab has had it. Could you not hint that —there are symptoms of plague?"

Perth laughed.

"There would be such confusion in the camp at the bare whisper of such a word; there would not be a creature who, seeing you, would not fly from you. You would be excommunicated by people's fear of you, more completely than if anathematised by the Pope."

"That would be awkward. Then say" (with a sigh) "that I am still suffering from sea-sickness, but that I will call on her ladyship in the course of to-morrow."

"Can I procure you anything before I leave you, Sir Edgar?"

"No, I thank you. My servant is gone out to purchase some fruit of the natives; he will be back soon."

So Perth bowed, and returned with the adverse intelligence to Bell.

"Well," said that dresser of dames, "if he was my sweetheart, and I had come all this way after him, I'd see him at Old Scratch before I would receive him to-morrow."

"Had he been *your* sweetheart, Mrs. Bell, he never could have remained an hour out of your presence when he had the chance of being with you;" after which speech Bell added Perth to the list of her fancied adorers.

She wished to engage him to take another walk with her on the following day, but Perth excused

himself on the score of business. He had to victual the *Lavinia* for the steward, and had that task been accomplished, he had no desire to occupy himself in talking English, when, by living amongst the Greeks and Turks, he could improve his knowledge of their languages. In every fresh acquisition of knowledge, his mind turned with tender regret to the old man who would have rejoiced with him, as over a treasure-trove. "I should have been *his* son," Perth thought, as he felt how dear a father he had been to him.

When, on the following day, Sir Edgar dressed his face with forced smiles to go and see his lady-love, he felt exceedingly provoked by her having followed him, and the same reason which made him careless and defiant in his manner to Miss Elliot, whilst he felt himself engaged to her, now made him rebel against the chain, of which Lady Bab's acts made him remember the weight.

When he reached the neighbourhood of her tent, however, he felt the confidence he had entertained of her demand on him for attention and admiration much diminished.

If an Englishwoman would know the power of her own attraction, she should go where men are plentiful and Englishwomen are scarce.

Lady Barbara had no sooner had a carpet spread on the grass, and arranged her Cashmere shawls gracefully on the cushions, than some naval officers, come on shore for a brief space, formed themselves

into a court round this sovereign. Military officers begged for introductions, and Lord Meith, who had sat by his niece's side for half an hour, and drunk lemonade, made and administered by the white hands of Bell, when he left his seat, found Sir John Moore ready to occupy it. Let a beautiful girl, a stranger, be taken into a ball-room in England, and no man will care to dance with her whilst he can obtain plain girls, with whom he is already acquainted. In the same way, if the women are all well-looking, but unknown, and he is acquainted with one plain girl, he will, if he can, remain with her all the evening, rather than break the ice of a new intimacy.

The officers might have aired their ancient Greek, those who knew any, or made acquaintance, by aid of signs, with the beautiful Greeks in the neighbouring villages, but they preferred getting a word or a smile from Lady Barbara, and these she dispensed liberally to all around. Each man, when he left her, departed thinking she was, though not strictly handsome, one of the most attractive women he had ever seen.

Thus, when Sir Edgar arrived, he found her in animated talk with Sir John Moore, and all that she could vouchsafe to the new-comer was a nod. The officers all sat round, Indian fashion, on the grass, whilst Bell served them with lemonade and coffee, the latter having been sent on shore, with

other creature comforts, from the admiral's ship. Lady Bab's value rose in Sir Edgar's eyes when he saw her thus surrounded. Certainly Sir John Moore seemed very much attracted by this siren, now the fresh charms of Rose Elliot were no longer to be contemplated. Besides—confound her!—she had not noticed him except by a nod, and on his walking up to her in the centre of gaping puppies, she had said sweetly that probably some one down there would make a space for him to sit down. Sir John Moore asked her for a song, and after a little hesitation, to enhance compliance, and a declaration that she could not sing without an accompaniment from her harp, which, of course, she had not there, she sang in a rich clear voice the following words:—

"Ask me not what gifts I prize;
Would'st thou know them, count thine own;
Thou! for worth and valour known,
Read the answer in mine eyes—
Eyes that seek for thine alone.

"Ask me not what gifts are mine,
To repay those thou may'st give—
Reverent worship whilst I live,
Love intense, to merit thine,
And all other love resign.

"Yet believe not what I say;
Dames for falsehood are arraign'd,
Half their protestations feign'd,
Cheat the ear but to betray;
Fly, then, from my spells away."

"I think I have given you a broad hint to

depart," cried Lady Barbara, "for the night has come very suddenly, and I am going to retire to my tent. I wish you *all* a good night, gentlemen," she said, pointedly including Sir Edgar in the sweeping bow she gave the circle, which sent him back to his own tent cursing her coquetry, but more in love with her than he had been since his Cambridge days. Alas for poor Leah! how dim and indistinct her image had become in his memory!

CHAPTER XLII.

"Unseen by all my tears shall flow,
Whilst sorrow wastes my youthful bloom;
Life cannot always strive with woe,
And grief is silent—in the tomb."

Lady Barbara, reclining on her silken cushions, with her rich draperies, surrounded by piled heaps of golden-coloured fruit, and seen through the soft light of that summer sky, with an admiring circle of men whose lips were full of praise, and their eyes of worship, was in different circumstances from those which surrounded Leah. She sat silent, with her sewing in her hands, by the side of her father, who read, by the flickering light of a single candle, a chapter in the Testament before they retired to rest. Small sprigs of holly stood inside the narrow casement, and the ground outside was white with snow. They gathered round the handful of fire, and were glad to seek that warmth in their beds which their poverty denied them during the day. Very silent and uncomplaining was Leah. When I used to see the father and his daughter I was ever reminded of a French picture of Belisarius carrying a boy, his sole guide and companion. A serpent

has twined itself round the foot of the unfortunate youth, who has become stupefied by the pain and the poison, whilst the blind warrior bears him along in vain pity and melancholy ignorance of the cause of that which is killing him.

Thus Caleb Preston could learn nothing of his child's distress of mind from the stupefaction of her grief, and from her natural reticence. She could die, but she could not forget. She went on in the quiet round of her duties; never omitting any, never slurring their performance. The sick were as carefully attended, her father's comforts as strictly watched. She only smiled to herself when she looked at her white transparent hands, and murmured, "O God! holy and good! how long?"

Caleb Preston, thoughtful, absent of mind, and unobservant by nature, was not at first alarmed by the appearance of declining health in Leah. He saw her as usual at prayer and at her meal-times. She was ever at her place to lead the choir at the meetings on the Lord's day, and Caleb's ear was not nice enough to find out that the voice which had been so full and melodious had dwindled down to an attenuated thread of sound.

"Miss Leah looks peaky, sir," said Molly to him one day.

"Much as usual," was the answer. "Leah was always delicate-looking, but she is very strong—remarkably strong," the father asseverated, a little

disturbed, and with a strange feeling that his asserting her strength of constitution would make her robust. "I see no difference in her," he retorted defiantly to Molly, who went off saying, "Other folks do, then, and 'there's none so blind as those who won't see.'"

That day at dinner Caleb saw that his daughter ate very little, and watching the movement of her knife and fork, he perceived how thin and white her hands had become.

"Are you ill, Leah?" he cried, with a sudden alarm and a terrible sickness of heart stealing over him.

The girl's face flushed a delicate pink, as if she were guilty of a crime.

"Ill, father! No, nothing is wrong with me. Why should you think I am ill?" and the rosy tint which suffused her beautiful face gave it a momentary look of plumpness and health that brought comfort to her father's heart.

"It was only that old woman's nonsense after all," he said to himself. "But you have not eaten any dinner," he said, returning to the charge.

"No, father, I ate an apple this morning, so I was not hungry."

On the following day Caleb Preston bought a sweetbread and some milk, that Molly might stew it for Leah's dinner, but as she refused to eat any unless her father and Molly shared it with her,

Caleb Preston found it too expensive a treat to be repeated.

He humbled himself so far as to beg some grapes of Luke, with whom he had had no communication since the disagreement about Perth. Luke gave him a quantity, sufficient to last several days, very willingly.

"I'm sure I don't see why Miss Leah should not have them. Master and Miss Rose don't seem to care for them, and there is no company now at the Holmes, nor any talk of any, and to keep them for that greedy governess goes against my grain. She eats all day. It is my belief that she would like to be a mouse shut into a Stilton cheese, that everything around her should be eatable."

"Miss Rose is old enough to part with a governess now," Caleb Preston observed.

"Just so. And they say there's no love lost between the ladies; but 'tis said, too, that Miss Bruce wishes to be mother-in-law instead of governess, or both in one."

"I don't hold with second marriages," said Caleb, thinking how distasteful it would have been to him to have taken another in the place of his sainted Lucy.

"That's as it may be," said Luke, who was the second time a widower, "but you won't get the world to dance to your pipe always, neighbour.

But here are the grapes, and you shall have more when you want them."

And Caleb hastened back with his treasure, to present them to Leah, who expressed all the pleasure her father had anticipated in receiving them, and ate a few, putting the rest aside for a sick child.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"A new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field."

It was not always that Lady Barbara could command the attendance of the man whom she most wished to captivate. He was frequently busy in seeing his troops exercised in the peculiar movements they would soon be required to perform in the presence of the enemy. The time which was consumed in waiting for the succour from Turkey—which arrived not—was not wholly lost, for Sir Ralph Abercrombie kept both the services in continual activity by directing them daily to embark and disembark with order and precision, that no unseemly flurry should mar their efficiency when, instead of having to make good their landing on a friendly soil, amidst the idle jest and ready laughter of those already on shore, they should have to gain their footing on a hostile coast bristling with French artillery.

Sir John Moore, however, found time occasionally to do homage to Lady Barbara's attractions. He saw her character in its true light, and knew that

she had no heart to suffer, but much vanity to buoy her up, and that she would suffer no serious inconvenience from his attentions. For himself he was invulnerable. Lady Barbara was to him but a faint and faded copy of the ladies with whom he had been familiar in his youth at the courts of the unhappy Marie Antoinette, of the Emperor Joseph, and of the Duke of Brunswick; so he could afford to play with the flickering fire of the lady's love without feeling the heat at his finger-tips; and she, for her own part, oftentimes drew back astonished at the imperturbability of her companion. She asked him one day how he could retain his serenity when an interval of a few hours only might place him in the front of battle, and face to face with death. He answered in those beautiful lines from the then celebrated tragedy of *Douglas*:—

> "'Free in his heart who for his country fights,
> He on the eve of battle can resign
> Himself to social pleasures, happiest then
> When danger to the soldier's heart endears
> The human joy that never may return.'"

The last line was said with a tender cadence, and look of devotion at the eager countenance of Lady Barbara. The lady did not half admire being met by weapons similar to her own.

"Confound the man!" she said mentally. "It would be much more to the purpose if he said, 'I will marry you, if you will accept me, if I do return.'

It would double my pleasure in obtaining an officer so notorious for gallantry, and so well connected, to be able to mortify that conceited young ape, Sir Edgar, who came up to me with the conviction gleaming from his eyes that I had come here merely to follow him. I do not believe I should have come at all, had I not had the thought of Sir John in my memory. And now, oh dear! if he would but make me an offer, and let the chaplain marry us at once, how charming it would be if he should be killed in the attack on Alexandria! Such an interesting young widow! Every one pitying me for the loss of such a man, and I would sing with profound emotion—

> 'And oh! what heart was his to lose!
> But I maun ne'er repine.'"

She pulled out her pocket-glass, and taking her cambric handkerchief, she pushed back her hair, and tried to arrange the muslin in the shape of a widow's cap. The result was so satisfactory, that she turned over in her mind whether her uncle, Lord Meith, might not open negotiations with Sir John as regarded an alliance with his niece; and supposing he should refuse to do so, she speculated as to whether, if Sir John were killed, she might not declare that they had been secretly engaged, or even privately married—dead men telling no tales—and be entitled to the honour and glory of widow-

hood from the death of so celebrated a soldier as her husband. Sir Edgar, whose vanity had been thoroughly mortified by his lady's neglect, began to believe that she was really very much in love, and took an opportunity of reminding Lady Barbara that, as an engaged woman, her encouragement of the pretensions of rival suitors was, at the least, unfair to him. Lady Bab turned off the subject laughingly. She did not like bondage herself, and would impose it on no one. Sir Edgar might consider himself free a few months sooner. The fickle youth would before have taken advantage gladly of the proposition; but now he deprecated it. He believed Sir John to be earnest in his devotion to Lady Bab, and he could not endure to be distanced in the pursuit. He behaved like an angry boy, and Lady Bab laughed at him, and withdrew within her tent, where she allowed no one to enter save Bell. There were secrets there, known only to the initiated; and men are not allowed to pry into the mysteries of a lady's toilette. Leah's delicate tint, indeed, unaided by art, required only pure water to renovate its brightness; but Lady Bab's stores of artillery were wonderful in their number and variety. An uninitiated writer will not dare to lift the curtain of the tent with a profane hand, and reveal the mysteries of beauty.

The time had come, however, when her reign on the shores of Marmorice was to terminate. She had

enjoyed herself exceedingly, and could not bear to leave those lovely shores, especially as, she complained to Bell, Sir John was more slippery than any eel. She had thought his backwardness had arisen only from his modesty; but she had given him encouragement enough, she was sure—a fact which was undoubted. Then she had imagined that when his life was so soon to be placed in jeopardy, he would not inflict on her the anxiety of belonging to him. He had said something of the kind, and when she was about to respond in a way favourable to his hopes, as she believed, he had heard the sound of a distant bugle, he declared, and had left her to inquire as to its meaning. And now, in a few hours, she must go back into that horrid ship, which was never still for an instant, but went bobbing up and down like a cork, depriving her of the use of her eyes, which she kept closed, and making up for the deprivation of that sense by the painful acuteness it produced on the organs of smell, every fresh odour producing an agony of spasmodic suffering.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"No—there is a necessity in fate
Why still the brave, bold man is fortunate;
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and right."

DRYDEN.

THE fleet left the fair Bay of Marmorice on the 23rd of February, 1801. In a few hours 175 sail, containing 15,330 men, were again buffeted about by the waves and winds. Three days after a squadron of store and troop ships from England joined them, and on the 2nd of March the whole fleet anchored in Aboukir Bay.

The sun was yet unrisen when this was accomplished, and when his circle of fire first appeared above the horizon, Perth watched the scene its light revealed with a heart throbbing with exaltation. In the wide expanse its light illuminated he saw the bosom of the distant Nile, shimmering in the new-born glory of day, bordered by palm and date groves, and dotted by Egyptian dwellings and villages. The crescent of the bay was formed of sand-hills, glowing in unity of colour with the saffron sky, and the glory of the scene filled Perth

with a transport which was born of expectation and hope. Like a scene in a theatre, this brilliant panorama was visible but for a few moments. A violent storm arose, black clouds covered the sky, and formidable mists rose up between the vessels and the shore. In the violence of the squalls of wind that followed, all hope of landing had for the present to be given up. It was as much as the sailors could accomplish, even in the shelter of the bay, to prevent the vessels being driven from their anchors. In this stormy turmoil the *Lavinia* got into closer neighbourhood than was desirable with a frigate named the *Helen*. The officers and crew of the *Lavinia* were fully occupied in preventing the collision of the vessels. Perth, whose humbler duties allowed him space for observation, unconnected with the working of the ship, and whose ears were ever quick to catch the intonation of a foreign language, felt a suspicion that the crew of the *Helen* were French, and that, by some means or other, an enemy was amongst them, if not a traitor. As the vessels parted he heard a jeering laugh from the *Helen*, and a sound very like "Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre," and the accompanying burden. With a flush on his face, arising from a doubt as to whether he was really justified in his suspicion, he went up to the captain, and told him what he suspected, and the grounds of his belief, who replied that he must be dreaming or drunk;

for, beside that he, the captain, knew the cut of the *Helen* as well he did of his own vessel, the signals were all correct. Perth withdrew, touching his cap, and very crest-fallen, and half an hour after the *Helen* cut her cable, shot ahead, hoisted French colours, and entered the harbour of Alexandria. A French vessel had captured the *Helen*, and possessed herself of the signals in use amongst the fleet, and had boldly availed herself of the advantages of the position, sailing as one of the fleet, and obtaining valuable information, which, with a large quantity of military stores she had on board, she doubtless conveyed to General Menon.

Perth was wise enough to hold his tongue with regard to the information he had volunteered to the captain of the *Lavinia*. He never raised his eyes when that gentleman encountered him by any chance, and his reticence impressed the sailor with an idea of his prudence, as did his disregarded suggestion with his intelligence.

When the gale abated, which was not till they had been for seven days in their present roadstead, three armed launches, containing Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Sir John Moore, and Sir Sidney Smith, reconnoitred the shore on the evening of the 7th of March.

They found, from the preparations of the French, that they had no chance of an easy disembarkation, but that every foot of sand would be vigorously contested. Serried bands of infantry and cavalry,

well mounted and equipped, occupied the sand-hills, which extended in the shape of a half-circle round the bay, forming a battery of about a mile in extent, with the Castle of Aboukir bristling with armed men at one point of the crescent. Twelve pieces of cannon crowned the bridge at different points; several carronades were detected half concealed, and the guns of the forts menaced a cross-fire at every point of approach. The general regarded the difficulties of the landing with anxious eyes, as does a veteran huntsman a yawning leap to be taken. There is doubt and difficulty in landing on the opposite bank, but there is disgrace in not attempting it, and shame even in hesitation; but the huntsman hazards only his own life and that of his horse, and Sir Ralph was about to endanger those of twenty-three thousand men. He had the discouragement also of a previous failure weighing on his mind, though, as he had not been first in command on that occasion, the onus had not fallen on him. It must greatly increase the respect with which the character of that veteran warrior is regarded when the difficulties of this undertaking are considered, and memory recalls that it was not the act of an officer glowing with the ardour of youth, or the eagerness of early manhood, but undertaken in the cool determination of age. Sir Ralph was sixty-eight years old.

The landing was determined on, and the night spent in necessary arrangement. The ships, driven

apart by the gales, were concentrated. At eight o'clock in the morning the boats were all arranged, so that each body of men might take its allotted place in the line at the instant of landing. Many a stout heart throbbed faster with suspense and expectation till the signal was given, and the boats, urged by willing arms, shot forward to the shore.

Every soldier sat erect and motionless, and silent as death. The splash of the oars was the only sound heard in regular cadence, as in close and exact order the boats in long line moved forward with steady rapidity. The silence was not of long duration. The French stood to their arms, and the sudden flash of their artillery preceded the deep roll of its thunder. The sea hissed and boiled around the boats, shot and shell falling in fearful profusion around them. When a man fell he was quickly removed—if dead, to the ocean; if wounded, to the bottom of the boat; and another took his place. Each stroke of the oars brought them into greater peril, grape and musket shot flying round them like hail. The unfortunate soldiers could only sit still and suffer, whilst the necessity for exertion nerved the eager arms of the sailors, who pulled vigorously forward, and with but little confusion the boats touched the sand.

Then the inaction ceased, and the soldiers leaping into the water, although nearly waist deep, rushed to the beach, formed in an instant, and with fixed

bayonets on their unloaded muskets charged impetuously up the steep. The enemy seemingly had been instructed not to hazard a struggle on the treacherous surface of the sand-bank, as they did not advance, but continued to fire volleys from the summits; which at length our troops, struggling to attain, succeeded in surmounting.

Though breathless with the toil of running through the yielding sand, they sprang forward with levelled bayonets. The unbroken line of glistening steel looked formidable to those opposed to it: without waiting to reload, the French fled in disorder.

That morning Perth had for the first time accosted the captain since he had received the reproof for the disregarded hint he had ventured to give. He begged permission to go on shore in one of the boats as a supernumerary, in case another oarsman should be wanted.

"Why do you want to go, youngster?" said the captain.

"I should like to be in it, if there's fighting to be done, sir. You see," Perth added piteously, "I never have seen anything of the kind, only read about it in Homer."

"Well, in with you; but you will soon have had enough, I dare say, and will be glad to get back to the ship."

Perth with beaming eyes thanked him, and leaped into the boat. Luckily for him, one of the sailors in

his boat was shot through the heart, and his comrades threw him overboard. Perth, in the scramble of landing, possessed himself of the dead man's musket, and, though he did not venture to place himself at first in the line of uniformity in his sailor's dress, he stepped into the place of one of the soldiers who fell out wounded, and charged the enemy with the reckless boldness of youth. A flying foe is a great incentive to pursuit, and Perth was rushing forward in high delight at the progress of arms which he had made, when a troop of dragoons came down in full charge on the thin line of English. One gigantic fellow met Perth in full career, and assured him that his hour was come. Perth replied in French that he doubted it, and stood with his bayonet fixed at the breast of the horse, which swerved, and the flourish of the Frenchman's sabre fell in empty air. In the meantime a heavy fire on the cavalry was opened by the 42nd Regiment, under which the French commander fell, and the troops, including Perth's assailant, galloped back in the utmost confusion.

The French troops fought better on the level, where they severely contested the ground on which the Guards had landed; but the panic which had stricken the other portion of the army at length seemed to infect even the most determined, and soon the whole force was completely driven back. The landing was achieved, the battle won, and the

enemy in full retreat towards Alexandria. Swarms of sharp-shooters covered their flight; but Sir Ralph was too cautious to allow his troops to pursue, and sounded a recall.

It is difficult to understand, at this distance of time, why an army so brave and so well disciplined as that of the French, with such advantages of situation, and so supported by artillery, should have allowed a very inferior force to effect a landing on their territory. Probably the seeming impossibility of the achievement rendered them careless.

The rest of the troops now landed. Wells were dug under the date trees, whose grateful shade and luscious fruit, growing by the side of the fan-like palm, told to the experienced eye where water was to be found. Store-houses were erected for provisions, which they hoped to obtain with more convenience from the Arabs than from the ships. In a few days the whole army proceeded to within four miles of Alexandria. Perth pushed forward with the soldiers with whom he had become acquainted whilst at Marmorice Bay. He was careful not to show himself again near the boats, for he knew how eagerly the steward of the *Lavinia* would claim him, on account of his usefulness to that functionary. Before a regular encampment could be formed a skirmish took place between the patrols of each army. At night the troops lay down under a palm grove, their arms piled before them, and lost in sleep for a while the quickened pulsation of hearts

that had beat high in expectation of the events of the morrow.

The nerves of Perth were too highly strung to admit of immediate repose. A sleepless veteran observed his restlessness, and advised him to lie still.

"I suppose," he observed testily, "you haven't a wife and children to think about in England, who will have to go to the parish if you are picked off to-morrow morning."

Perth humbly admitted the absence of such incentives to watchfulness, and gazed up at the flickering leaves of the palm trees.

"I wish they would grow at home, they are so beautiful," said the youth, with the professional admiration of a gardener's son.

"I had rather look at an avenue of elms," said a young man on the other side of Perth.

Our hero turned quickly on him.

"You are an Essex man," he said.

"How do you know?" said the youth, astonished.

"I know," replied Perth, without explaining; the truth being that he had pronounced the word elms *ellums*. "The elms you would like to see," Perth continued, "are the avenue outside Stoneham, and you are the son of Mrs. ——."

No reply was made to this, and Perth, having knelt reverently, said a short prayer aloud, to which the veteran uttered "Amen." Perth always

knelt and prayed openly, night and morning, heedless of the taunts with which he was frequently greeted. The words of Christ always were present with him, "He who is ashamed of me in this world, of him will I also be ashamed when in the presence of my Father in heaven."

He slept, pillowed by his arm, and shadowed by the palm leaves and date trees from the supposed malign influence of the clear moonlight. His loose dress of shirt and sailor's trousers, with a small shining black hat, admitted of the free circulation of the blood during repose, whilst the less fortunate soldier only by stealth could remove his stiff stock and loosen his sword-belt. When the sun first revealed a line of brilliant light over the distant sand-hills, the bugles sounded the reveille, and the troops started up to meet the enemy, whose force had considerably increased during the night, and who were strongly intrenched amidst some sand-hills.

At an early hour the British army quitted the place where they had bivouacked. Abercrombie had divided the troops into three columns, and appointed a strong squadron of gunboats to support the movements on shore, by keeping parallel with the left column of the army. This was accomplished by the near approach of the boats to the beach, their oars keeping time to the march of the soldiers.

Before our troops reached the ground where it

was intended they should halt, a large body of the enemy's infantry was observed upon an eminence, which extended nearly across the peninsula, and seeming, by their manœuvres, as if meditating an attack. A line was instantly formed, and the army advanced in the best possible order about half a mile, and halted on a favourable piece of ground. The two armies were now separated by a plain not exceeding two miles in extent, the enemy being posted on an advantageous ridge, with the right to the canal of Alexandria, and the left towards the sea.

The position of the enemy having been reconnoitred, Sir Ralph determined to attempt to turn their right flank. Accordingly, on the morning of the 13th, the army marched in two columns, Major-General Cradock having the right, and Major-General Lord Cavan the left. The 90th Regiment formed the advanced guard of the former, and the 92nd of the latter. The artillery, from want of horses, could only be dragged on slowly through the sand by the efforts of the sailors, and were rather an encumbrance than an advantage. A short march had carried our troops from groves of date and palm trees, where they had passed the night, and the leading regiments found themselves in the presence of five thousand foot and six hundred horse soldiers, having thirty pieces of cannon to support them, and a ridge of sand-hills as an advantageous position. The French

were quite prepared for an attack; for, quitting their high ground, they hastened forward to meet the English, who, instantly spreading themselves in line, received the attack with equal readiness. The 92nd held its ground manfully against the infantry, whilst the 90th contended with the cavalry, who charged them vigorously, supposing them, by their helmets, to be dismounted dragoons. The 90th Regiment, unbroken and undismayed, received them on the point of the bayonets. The French cavalry then retreated, many of them falling under an effective volley of musketry, which was poured upon them as they wheeled. Before this was effected, and whilst the panic was but partial, Perth, who had been using his musket with great satisfaction to himself, saw a French cavalry officer riding down on him, and taking aim, shot him through the body. He drooped forward, falling at length heavily on the ground, and the terrified horse, rushing onwards, was caught by the bridle by Perth, who jumped on his back in all the ecstasy of a successful victor who had a substantial benefit to repay his prowess.

The value of horses had risen to a fabulous height in the estimation of the English force during this campaign, none possessing them except the generals, and one or two of their staff. As Perth patted the sleek neck of his new acquisition, he thought of the old blind pony at his father's house, and handled

the new horse more tenderly for love of the old one.

Sir Ralph now arrived, accompanying the toiling seamen, who were dragging on the guns slowly through sand which covered their axletrees. The anxiety of the veteran general to see how the battle progressed, and the audacious disregard of personal risk which always characterised him, carried Sir Ralph forward into the career of the enemy's cavalry, and his horse, receiving a shot in a vital part, fell to the ground. The French horsemen immediately surrounded him, and were about to take him prisoner or despatch him, when a charge of bayonets with the 90th Regiment obliged them to retreat, and Perth, galloping up at the moment, assisted the general to rise, and placed him on his newly-acquired treasure.

"I shan't forget you, nor your horse, my lad. One of my sailors, I see: always sharp fellows for their neighbours' horses at all times," he said, smiling, as he found himself amongst the trappings of a French horse-trooper.

Perth touched his hat, and with a heavy heart saw the general ride off. He could not endure the notion that his new charger should be exposed to shots, cannons and bullets, cuts from sabres, and pricks from lances.

"Oh!" cried Perth ruefully, "what an old madcap 'tis!" as he saw the general riding off into the

thickest of the *mêlée*. "If he does not care for his own skin, he might think a little about my horse. I wish I had not given it to him;" and in his anxiety to see once more the arching neck and proud action of his darling, he pursued as closely as he could the movements of the general.

The brigade of Lord Cavan was at the same time sharply engaged, and our troops were ordered to deploy, which was effected with great quickness and precision. After a warm contest, in which the firing of both parties was uncommonly severe, the French retreated on all sides in good order, under the protection of their artillery, which, being remarkably well served, was very galling. The enemy did not halt on the position they had occupied in the morning, but retreated across a plain two miles in extent to a long ridge of sand-hills, which appeared to be within range of fire from Alexandria. Determined to drive them from their stronghold before they were well established in it, Abercrombie ordered his centre column to advance. The wings took a greater sweep on each side, so as to gain possession of some eminences which might protect the main body. Thus they proceeded till within range of the batteries.

Here a halt was ordered; the menacing appearance of the enemy's works, and of the country on every side, showing the necessity of circumspection. The general and his staff rode forward to recon-

noitre, whilst through some mistake the unfortunate soldiers were left exposed to the fire of forty-two guns, with which the French marksmen mowed them down as if for practice, during the hours the officers employed in their examination. This was a fearful mistake, as the men might have been marched out of the line of the shot by slightly turning to either side.

Perth, urged by curiosity to see all that could be seen, and by a yearning desire to have his horse back, was pressing after the general and his staff on foot, without recollecting that he might as well be hit as those falling around him, when a wounded soldier, scarcely older than himself, writhed his body round, and tried to attract the attention of Perth by seizing his leg as he was stepping delicately between the wounded and dead men. Perth stooped to disengage his ankle, and saw the countenance of the youth he had recognised under the palm groves as coming from Essex. Shots were ploughing up the ground all round them, but Perth remembered the words of the youth's mother, and said—

"Poor fellow! What can I do for you?"

"Oh! I must die—I must die. I am so sick with the hot sun. Could you not drag me away to those palm trees?"

Perth longed to see what the general was doing with his horse, but he could not resist this appeal.

"If you could walk a little way leaning on me,"

he said, "it might not hurt you so much as being dragged or lifted."

The youth attempted to rise, but fell back, and Perth entreated a soldier who was wounded in the face to help him, and between them they carried the youth to the date-tree grove, and laid him down softly on the sand. Then the man left them to go to the rear, and the youth, opening his languid eyes, cried out, "Water!" Perth fetched him some in his hat from a well which had been dug under the date trees, bathed his face, and held the grateful fluid to his lips in his hand.

"Did you know them?" he gasped.

"Your mother was very kind to me," Perth replied.

"Tell her I died doing my duty; and cut off a piece of my hair for her."

The face that looked anxiously at Perth's became haggard and wild in its desire for some promise.

"Your mother told me to do you a kindness if I ever had an opportunity. I will see her if I live, and give her your message and this lock of hair;" and he cut off a piece with his knife, and placed it in a little hymn-book which had been a birthday gift from Leah.

The pain felt by the young soldier made him writhe about on the ground.

"Do not think me a coward," said he, "but the

agony makes me groan. Don't tell her that," he added in an undertone, as if he were fearful she would hear it.

His breath now came in quick, jerky gasps. Perth raised his head and shoulders to allow him to breathe more easily. After a few minutes the inevitable and unmistakable change came over his countenance which foretells release from pain and insensibility to sorrow. There was a slight quivering in the limbs, and Perth laid down the heavy head on its pillow of sand. It seemed very sad, in after years, when he recollected it. As it then was, he hunted about till he found the cloak of a dead soldier, and flinging it over the body of his friend, returned to see what was going on in the most stirring scenes in which it had yet been his fate to mingle.

It had been decided that General Hutchinson should attack the right, and that the reserves, under Sir John Moore, supported by the Guards, should attack the left. When, however, General Hutchinson reached the ground by a considerable circuit, he saw that the enemy's position was a very strong one, defended by numerous artillery, and commanded by fortified hills near Alexandria. General Hutchinson halted, and sent to inform Sir Ralph that the heights could not be carried without considerable loss, and if carried, the victors would be exposed to the fire from the fortified hills, and could not maintain the

position without intrenchments, which they had not the means to construct.

Beyond the hills on which the enemy were posted, nothing had hitherto been seen, and the information they had received had been doubtful and conflicting. Mr. Dundas, the late consul of Alexandria, stated that the hills were close to, and if possessed would command the town of Alexandria. According to a map possessed by Sir Ralph, the only map of Egypt in the whole expedition, a considerable plain of sand seemed to intervene between the heights and the city. Sir Ralph believed in his solitary map. Mr. Dundas, with some show of reason, appealed to his personal knowledge of the situation.

CHAPTER XLV.

"Quick of despatch, discreet in my trust,
Rigidly honest, and severely just."

But we must return to our hero, whom we left pursuing the errant steps of the veteran warrior. Perth was pressing forward when he heard a sharp voice calling his name, and on turning he perceived the steward of the *Lavinia*, with ire in his countenance, puffing over the sandy ascent in pursuit of his *protégé*.

"A pretty dance you have led me, you young rapscallion, and I at my wits' ends for want of you. Not a lemon, nor a shaddock, nor a fig, nor a bit of green food on board the *Lavinia*, and you know how the cap'en goes on about it, and I always have got such credit——"

Perth laughed.

"Where would your credit have been but for me?"

"And where would you have been but for me?" retorted the steward. "Playing ducks and drakes with broken oyster-shells on the beach at Portsmouth, instead of seeing life——"

"And death," said Perth, "in Aboukir Bay."

"There's a sight for you! and that's what I wanted you for," cried the steward, pointing to the east, where a small body of horsemen were coming on at full gallop, their white dresses gleaming in contrast with the swarthy limbs which the draperies only partially concealed. On their left arms they bore circular shields, and in their right hands swords.

"Arabs," said Perth, who had become familiar with their appearance at Malta.

Perth knew why the steward, intent on his own vocation, had followed him. He was required to enter into a negotiation with the strangers, to induce them to send or bring provisions for the purpose of barter; and without his services as an interpreter, nothing could be done. He was but a youth after all, and a spirit of fun danced in his eyes as he assured the steward that all the Arabic he had learnt had gone clean out of his head. The sight of those dark fellows, with their shining swords, had made him "all of a shake," and sent every word of every language to the right-about. The steward, weary with his chase of Perth, and irritated by the heat of the sun, and his consequent thirst, felt his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth as he tried to threaten that Perth should receive a round dozen so soon as he got him back to the ship, when their attention was attracted by

the movements of Sir Ralph Abercrombie and his staff, who, perceiving the new-comers, rode towards them as if to parley. The Arabs, conjecturing the rank of the party from their dresses and decorations, as well as from the fact of their being mounted when the rest of the army were horseless, began to give them an honorary reception, according to their own notions of etiquette. One Arab detached himself from the number, which was of about a hundred horsemen, and galloped full speed across the line of advance, flourishing the sword over his head, and at the same time reining up his horse suddenly on its haunches, so as to bring it to an instantaneous halt. The first man then fell back into his place, and the second performed the same manœuvre, all joining in wild shouts, which might mean either expressions of joy or defiance. Sir Ralph reined up his steed, or rather that of Perth. It was important that friendly relations should be established between the English and the native tribes, and he restrained the indignation of his staff, who were apt to consider the sword flourished so close to their heads to be a menace rather than a compliment. When the din and confusion had subsided, the general advanced to the Arab who seemed to be the chief of the party. He was a magnificent barbarian, with immensely broad shoulders and chest. His hair and beard, which were long and flowing, were deep black. His black eyes were set in the clear bluish white of the ball, and

gleamed more brightly from the contrast. His head was covered with a white turban, and a white Cashmere robe descended to his ankles when he stood up to his full height of six feet three inches.

Sir Ralph involuntarily addressed him in English, and then, with a slight flush on his wrinkled cheeks at his own absurdity, changed his speech to French with as little effect. The reply, or efforts to reply, made in Arabic were but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal to the general. He turned to the gentlemen of his staff, and conjured them to try to recollect if they had by any chance knowledge of a few words of Arabic, or of any language sufficiently resembling it to come to some understanding with the natives, from whom it was so important to obtain intelligence.

"General," said Sir John Moore, "I know most continental languages, which are all related as mothers, brothers, or cousins to each other, but to these the Oriental languages are utterly alien, and require altogether a fresh set of roots. I confess that, excepting the usual greeting, *Salaam aleikum*, 'Peace be with you,' a rather incongruous salutation on a battle-field, the worthy young giant in front of us might as well have talked Hebrew, so far as I am concerned."

"What on earth am I to do?" said Sir Ralph, looking intently on the Arab chief to read the meaning of his words in the flashing eyes, deli-

cately-defined hooked nose, and gleaming white rows of his teeth.

Whilst he spoke Perth stood by the side of his charger, and ventured to pat its arched neck, then with his little black glazed cap, bound with the ribbon marked *Lavinia* in his hand, and with an honest blush on his cheeks, flushing even to the roots of his light curly hair, he said humbly, "If the general will be pleased to make use of me, I think I can interpret on both sides what may be said."

"Why, bless me! you are the boy who lent me this horse!" exclaimed Sir Ralph. "I thought I knew your face again. What is this that you tell me? Can you talk Arabic?"

"Yes, sir, moderately."

"An impudent young pretender, no doubt," said Mr. Dundas, late consul at Alexandria, who ought to have known Arabic, but did not.

"No, no, gentlemen," replied the steward, "he is not an impostor. He belongs to the *Lavinia*, and though he is a little wild when he once gets on shore, and difficult to catch, as the Lord knows I have experienced this morning"—and he wiped his brow with a handkerchief on which was depicted, in bright red figures on a yellow ground, Nelson boarding the *San Joseph*—"yet he has a wonderful gift of the gab, and I believe knows every lingo under the sun."

"What does the Arab chief say?" said Sir Ralph.

"He says," replied Perth, "that your excellency's presence is more to be desired than the first light of the new moon in the desert, and that the feet of the French spread death as certainly as do the ravages of the fly seroot."

"Ask him in his own language," continued Sir Ralph, "if he will dismount, and walk aside with me alone, you attending as an interpreter."

The general awaited with some anxiety the result of Perth's translation, not being sure that the youth had not invented the version he had just given of the Arabian compliment, and he felt relieved when, after a moment's hesitation, the Arab chief flung himself lightly from his mare, and gave it to one of his followers to hold; then retaining his sword and shield, he waited in seeming good faith the slower process of dismounting which was carried out by the veteran general.

The steward looked after the trio as they moved out of earshot, the boy walking respectfully behind Sir Ralph unarmed, for knowing the position his station required him to keep, he delivered his musket to the steward, lest the Arabs should suspect treachery to their chief from his following the two leaders.

"A fine thing book-learning is! To think that all the fine gentlemen should be brought to a stand-still, as it were, for the want of the right tongue in their heads, and this whipper-snapper boy, whom

I picked up out of charity, as it were, carrying all before him, and taken into the secrets of the general, whether Sir Ralph likes it or not. There will be no holding him when he comes on board again—if he ever does come," said the steward, the doubt creating a panic in his mind. "He will be above his work, and be kept to do lingo for the great generals. Worst of all, he may get thick with the other stewards, and if the vessels all get provisioned through him, where will my credit be? And the *Lavinia* always was the best provided before, and nobody knew how 'twas managed, besides the nice little pickings I made out of it myself—he getting the things cheap, and I selling them to the captain and officers dear. I have a great mind I'll try to do a little business on my own account. The fellows look sharp enough. Ahem! good gentlemen. I want to buy some victuals," said he, looking up very anxiously at the olive countenances, which had something eagle-like and sinister in their hooked noses and clearly-cut nostrils, very unlike the blunt, Saxon features, rendered more obtuse by habits of indolence and good living. "Meat, to eat!" he exclaimed, making signs by mouth and hand as to his necessities. The Arabs surveyed his antics with benign indifference. Had they been of a nature given to an appreciation of the ridiculous, they might have smiled, but as it was, they merely saw that the Englishman pre-

tended to be hungry—a fact which, from his obesity, they imagined to be of rare occurrence, and likely to be conducive to his health. To his intense relief, he saw Sir Ralph walking thoughtfully towards his staff, and Perth accompanying the Arab chief back to the spot where his followers awaited his approach.

When he drew near and vaulted on his mare, the steward poured forth an eloquent prayer in English that the mighty chief should order his followers to bring into camp just sufficient to victual his Majesty's ship *Lavinia*, and promised on his part to be under a certain grove of date trees to receive the consignment, and to pay gold for it. The chief turned his piercing glances on Perth to explain the meaning of the petition, and Perth immediately translated it by a request for sheep, goats, vegetables, and as many hundred horses as the tribe might be induced to spare. Perth knew that the necessity for the latter was nearly as great as for the animal food on board the ships, and for the vegetables and fruits, so indispensable for the health of those kept almost entirely on salt beef and biscuits. The chief replied that the penalty of death would be inflicted by the French on any Arab who was detected in supplying provisions to the English army; to which Perth responded that the mighty sheik and his followers were swift as the antelopes on the mountains, brave as the panthers of the desert, and

mighty, inscrutable, and not to be withstood, like the parching blast of the simoom; moreover, that the sheiks in the British ships would repay the risk by much fine gold—an argument which Perth had always found potent amongst all sorts and conditions of men.

From the information derived from the sheik, Sir Ralph Abercrombie found that his map was, if the Arab's information were to be relied on, perfectly correct, and that the sand-hills were at a great distance from Alexandria; that a sand-plain of considerable extent was between the hills and the town, and the sheik added that there was a strongly-fortified position in front of it.

The general called a council of war, and stated the tenor of the intelligence he had received from the Arab chief. He observed that, should they carry the ridge of sand-hills in front of them, they would only be exposed to the enemy's fire from the fortifications to which they would have retired, which could not be carried without artillery and considerable delay, and without which they would be no nearer the possession of the town. In the meantime, it was a source of gratulation that the Arab town, which had been invested from the first day of the landing of the British troops, had capitulated, and the 20th Regiment, which had been employed for the purpose, was now free to join the main army, in readiness for any duty that might occur.

Mr. Dundas observed that he considered the report given by the Arab chief as utterly unreliable. In the first place, it had been interpreted by an ignorant youth, who probably invented where he did not understand; and supposing that he had translated honestly and to the best of his ability, it was too probable that the Arabs were in the pay of the French, who had sent them to give information which, by occasioning delay to the English army, might enable the enemy to construct new embankments, and end by wearing out the patience and damping the energies of the British troops, who were now eager to be led to the attack. Mr. Dundas reiterated his belief that the sand-ridges once carried, the shot and shells poured down from them on the city would give the English possession of it after a few hours' bombardment. The worthy but injudicious diplomatist was in a hurry to get back to the luxurious dwelling from which the possession of the French had dislodged him, and in which he felt a conviction that the prowess of the British troops would speedily repossess him if they were led to the attack at once, and without reflecting that the courage of the diplomatist in fighting by deputy requires no particular daring.

Sir John Moore's serious and reflective mind did not endorse the opinions of the last speaker. He was of opinion that the information afforded by the Arab, tallying with the chart in the general's posses-

sion, was probably correct, and that cavalry would be necessary to pursue the enemy across the plain, and cut them to pieces before they could reach the shelter of the fortifications which flanked the town.

These opinions ultimately prevailed, and the troops were withdrawn to the position from which they had driven the enemy in the morning.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Some bloodless ghost, such as they tell
In the lone cities of the silent dwell;
And there, unseen by all but Alla, sit,
Each by its own pale carcass, watching it."

MOORE.

In the evening Perth communicated with several of the sailors, who were returning on board their ships after dragging the guns up to the front, and requested the purveyors of the several vessels, if they wished to fresh victual their ships, to come on shore with what sums in gold they could spare, for the purpose of purchasing the stores brought in by the Arabs. The young man had not failed to make a heavy purse for himself, whilst on the coast of Marmorice, by his transactions with the different dealers; for, when he had once possessed himself of a few guineas, he trusted his own judgment as to selection, and bought and sold on his own account.

The gold thus obtained he had concealed in a hole dug at night under a tree, which he had marked so as to recognise it easily. Before dawn, on the day following his interview with the Arabs, he dug up

his guineas, which he intended to add to before his transactions with those wandering tribes were concluded.

Perth made no secret of the percentage he took, though he concealed the fact of his keeping the money. The stewards had no choice but to use him as an interpreter of their necessities, and though they declared it was a shame when they saw the gold dropping into Perth's trousers pockets, he always silenced them by recommending their taking affairs into their own hands, or finding some other Arabic scholar.

The bag was very heavy that Perth placed in a fresh hiding-place, on the evening of the day when the Arabs had driven their sheep and goats into the British camp, and had brought their stores of curdled camels' milk, mixed with salt and Cayenne pepper, for the delectation of the infidels.

Not being assured of the safety of his treasure, he determined to go further away from the camp across the broad expanse of sands. He was tempted onward by the thought that the greater the distance accomplished, the better chance for the preservation of his gold, till, as he walked on in the silence of night, he looked back to see how far he had proceeded, and observed the tents of the British army gleaming ghostly in the pale light of the moon, each extent of canvas covering bodies of breathing men, who in a few days would find their last resting-place in the

sands beneath them. A certain indescribable elevation of spirit led Perth to think less of the things appertaining to this life and more of eternity. On the eastern side the sands stretched away into undiscovered distance; but to the south some stunted mimosa trees gave a little variety to the landscape, and a mound of stones, which were nearly large enough to be called rocks, gave him a hope of finding a safe hiding-place for his treasure by the removal and replacing of one of the smaller ones. He walked faster to get rid of the weight of his bag of gold, not without a thought of the German story of "Hans in Luck," and a suspicion that such might be his fate, when he at length reached the pile of rocky stones, and stooping, he selected one too heavy to be displaced by accident, and, after lifting it, he dug a hole in the soft earth beneath, and burying the bag of gold, placed the fragment of rock over it. Having accomplished this to his satisfaction, he stood up and turned round to observe whether any witness had existed of his performance, but the silent moon and cloudless stars only seemed to look down on him, and rebuke his suspicion. On a second observation, however, he saw something which, for an instant, made his heart stand still with a feeling of awe. At some considerable distance a figure in white stood seemingly motionless on the sand between him and the mimosa shrub. The deep solitude and silence of night, the motionless aspect of the

apparition, brought back to his mind all the stories of the power of the evil spirit to tempt the unwary, when far away from human fellowship, to destruction—sometimes producing madness, and urging the unfortunate victims of their wiles to sundry kinds of death, or luring them away to frightful deserts, where they were never again heard of, nor aught discovered saving some fragment of their clothes.

Perth, to balance this dread, had the natural courage and temerity of youth, and the love of adventure which determined him to satisfy himself if this were a delusion of the senses only, or a living creature. He felt involuntarily for his dagger, which he had purchased of one of the Arabs, and wore inside the scarf which he had bound round his middle. The figure was too distant to have perceived how he had been occupied, so that he had no anxiety about his treasure. The phantom remained motionless, and he advanced towards it at a pace rather less rapid than usual. He was determined to overcome his reluctance to follow it; but the reluctance existed still, and delayed his steps involuntarily. As he walked onward the long melancholy cry of the jackal broke the silence, and Perth turned involuntarily to the spot where the unclean beasts congregated over the places where lay the dead in their shallow graves. The cry sounded eyry and ominous, and again cold fear shook his frame; for,

in turning to where the figure had stood, he could see nothing but the wide expanse of sand, the heap of stones, and the low mimosa shrubs.

Perth turned sick and faint with the thought that what he had observed was supernatural. He walked resolutely up to the place where he had thought the appearance had stood, and was thankful for the light breeze which played over his forehead amongst his curling hair, now moist with terror. It came cool and fresh from the sea, and brought with it thoughts of brave men and human fellowship. He stood still to consider for a moment. There was no shelter that he could perceive. He himself must stand out a single object now on the far-stretching sands. The mimosa shrubs were but three feet high, and so thickly set with thorns that any one who attempted to lie down amongst them would have been as completely powerless in their grasp as Gulliver in the clutches of the Liliputians. He walked all round the bushes to discover if any one had crouched down behind them ; but there was no one, and no footsteps of human creature on the loose surface of the sand.

Perth returned slowly to the camp, looking back continually, lest some unknown creature should be pursuing him, and unnerved by dread of supernatural phantoms. When he arrived amongst the tents, he laid himself down near one in which he heard some soldiers talking. He did not listen to

what the soldiers said, but the voices made company for him.

The following day more Arabs came in, and Perth was busy in negotiating sales, and in gaining additions to be placed under the stone in the desert, the thought of which, notwithstanding his pleasure at his increased wealth, made his blood run cold. The terrors which, to my readers, doubtless seem absurd, were not easy to combat in a youth who had been taught that Satan is ever on the watch, seeking whom he may devour, and capable of taking any form, either of attraction or terror, to lure or to terrify men to their destruction. He was a practical youth, however, and was not a whit the less sharp in making his bargains.

Luckily he succeeded in pleasing three parties—namely, the Arabs, who sold; the British, who bought; and himself, who made a handsome percentage.

Whilst Perth was busy in his negotiations, he saw, to his astonishment, that two unexpected witnesses had been added to the transactions; for, draped by a rich Cashmere shawl, with a massive gold chain round her neck, to which a magnificent gold watch was appended, stood Lady Barbara Westeura, leaning on the arm of Bell, who was also dressed in her best attire, with intent to damage the hearts of his Majesty's military servants, as a ship was but a circumscribed sphere of action. They

were both veiled, and held parasols over their heads to protect them from the sun, and looking younger and fairer through the soft network of flowered lace, which but partially concealed their features. Thus they stood examining curiously the Arab merchandise—cinnamon, spices of all kinds, truffles, asparagus, onions and garlic, curdled milk, lemons, citrons, and carpets woven and dyed by the Arab women in brilliant colours in the native tents. These last attracted Lady Barbara's attention, and she examined them curiously, as one of the Arabs knelt and unrolled the shining texture. She was pleased at the attention paid her, and observed with interest the unusual spectacle of these inhabitants of the desert in their intercourse with civilisation. The men had dark complexions, black and piercing eyes, and mostly countenances both fierce and forbidding. Their dress consisted of a shirt, loose trousers, and a cloak, all white, with a black turban, from beneath the folds of which their glossy black hair fell in ringlets. In their hands they carried long rifles, pistols in their girdles, and a row of cartouch-boxes, made of reeds, on their breasts. Their glittering eyes and swarthy features gave them a look of peculiar ferocity, which Perth believed did not belie their character. Lady Barbara saw nothing in their aspect to alarm her. The chief, or sheik, did not occupy himself in the sale of the merchandise, but sat on his Arab mare, looking on gravely. He

was a finely-formed man, with handsome features, but had disfigured himself by dyeing his beard with henna, which had turned it from black to a bright brick-dust colour. His head was encircled by a Cashmere shawl, the ends of which fell over his shoulders, instead of the white dress of his followers. His person was adorned with a rich satin robe of crimson embroidered with gold, and over it was a black Cashmere coat, with scroll patterns of embroidered gold down the back and over the loose sleeves.

Lady Barbara was greatly flattered by the glances with which this wild potentate regarded her; but Perth, who had knowledge enough of Oriental character to understand the feeling with which the chief looked on the Englishwomen—for Bell came in for her full share of attention—was divided between the desire he felt to pull the sheik off his horse, and his wish to recommend Lady Bab and Bell to leave the spot. As one was less arduous than the other, Perth addressed the lady, and recommended her to return to the vessel, telling her that he would take care to purchase for her any article she might wish to possess; but Lady Barbara contented herself by regarding him with a stare of wonder at his impertinence in giving her advice, and continued to observe the swarthy chief with as much apparent interest as he bestowed on her. Perth was therefore compelled to make the purchases with more speed

than was consistent with economy, and, worried and mortified for his countrywomen, he dismissed the Arabs as soon as he could get rid of them. They did not retire from the camp, however, till near dark, but rode about in different directions, and as Sir Ralph had given stringent orders that they should be treated with the greatest respect and consideration, and paid to the uttermost farthing for every article purchased of them, Perth had no reason nor any excuse for interfering.

Lady Barbara had come on shore from Lord Meith's vessels with his permission to see the country, on condition that she should return to the ship so soon as she was satisfied, and the long-boat was directed to await her orders and bring her back; but when the midshipman came up to her for directions, she stated her intention of remaining on shore for the night, and directed that a tent should be immediately erected for her accommodation. The midshipman bowed, and disappeared to have her orders carried out; and Lady Barbara had the satisfaction of feeling that she had her own way, and had given a large amount of trouble. She cared little for the disapprobation of her kinsman. "He must get pleased again, if he were angry," she observed to Bell; and this accommodating waiting-woman, who enjoyed her freedom on shore all the more from being pent up so long in the admiral's cabin, so soon as the tent was erected, and some articles of

furniture brought from the ship, occupied herself in making it as comfortable as possible for the occupation of her mistress and herself.

When night came, a couple of sailors were placed at the door of the lady's tent as a guard, the soldiers being fully occupied in their own duties. They walked up and down dutifully in the moonlight, till one of them struck his foot against something which was both stiff and pliant to the touch. He called his companion to examine it.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Brave men and cowards are equally afraid, but they are not equally masters of their fear."—Queen Christine of Sweden.

Perth wished to add his gold that day acquired to his hidden store, but was so reluctant to encounter the demon of the solitude, that he had nearly persuaded himself that it would be wiser to make two different *caches*. He detected, however, the cowardice that lurked in the suggestion, and determined not to give way to it. Accordingly, when all was silent in the camp excepting the answering cries of the sentinels, he went towards the scene of his last night's adventure with a determined step.

The wilderness of barren sands was again before him, and again that infinite space seemed haunted by its own peculiar spectres of light and sound. His senses, excited by sleeplessness at night, and by the heat of the sun during the day, conveyed unreal impressions to his brain. Sometimes he fancied he saw in the distance bands of horsemen careering, and heard their wild ulalas. These passed away, and the moon shone again on the deserted sands; but Perth stopped to listen, for he heard clearly the

pealing of convent bells, which he had listened to so frequently when at Malta. They were so clear and distinct that he believed some religious building must exist in the far-off desert. Then he remembered to have read that the same ghostly peals deceived the ears of the Crusaders six hundred years before, and cold terror crept over his frame.

As he walked on with unassured steps, he seemed to see his father moving onwards a few yards in front of him. He tried to speak. "Father!" he would have cried, but his lips refused to utter the sound; and he closed his eyes, and, standing still, prayed to be delivered from this, the most terrible of his illusions. The mental effort—perhaps the reference to a higher Power, who could be a very present help in time of trouble—relieved him for the moment, and when he unclosed his eyelids he saw nothing.

He was coming near now to the mound of stones and the bushes of mimosa. He felt so terror-stricken and heart-sick, that he should be glad, he thought, to drop his gold into his hiding-place and retrace his steps as soon as possible to the camp. He lifted the fragment of rock with some effort, and uncovering his treasure, added the gold he had gained that day to the former accumulation. Again he rose from his stooping position to see if there might be any witness of his act, and again, in the same place, but more distinctly as the moonlight was brighter,

he distinguished a form which his troubled memory and fancy combined suggested to be that of Leah—but Leah dressed in grave-clothes. The size and aspect were those of his sister, as he had seen her in his slumber leaning over him to give him her little hoard of silver. Could it have been a delusion of imagination? There the apparition stood, so sad and still. "Leah!" he cried; but his voice was hoarse, like the efforts of a sleeper under a night-mare. She seemed to be looking towards him. Did it mean that his sister was numbered amongst the dead, and had come to tell him that he must see her no more? He reasoned thus with himself: "If it is a delusion of my senses, or an evil spirit sent by the father of lies to torment me, it will disappear at my prayers to Heaven." He knelt down, and, stretching his supplicating hands above his head, he poured forth his entreaties not to be abandoned to the delusions of the demon. His words, uttered aloud, sounded weird-like in the depth of that desert wilderness. When he had prayed, he looked towards the spot where the figure had stood, but it was gone, and Perth felt that he possessed the protection of Heaven against the machinations of the spirit of evil.

He turned towards the camp, walking swiftly, and was near enough to distinguish the white rows of tents gleaming in the moonlight, when a distant group of horsemen scoured across the plain at full

speed. Their grey or white horses, and dromedaries, and white draperies gave them a ghost-like appearance. They did not pass near to Perth, and he could not distinguish them accurately, but loud shrieks proceeded from the centre of the group, mingled with yells of laughter. Perth looked after them with apprehension, till nothing was seen but a cloud of sand, which glimmered and sparkled in the moonshine, and then all trace of the phantom horsemen was lost in the trackless desert.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"I ask not the pleasures that riches supply,
My sabre shall win what the feeble must buy—
Shall win the young bride with her long flowing hair,
And many a maid from her mother shall tear."

"'Tis much pleasanter sleeping on shore than in that rocking vessel," said Lady Bab to Bell, rolling herself round on her cushions, the first night of their landing on Aboukir Bay. "I hope that curly-headed boy will remember that I want two more carpets like the one I bought to-day."

"La! my lady, do you think 'tis proper that we should go to sleep with them nasty sailors outside a-walking up and down? Supposing they should peep inside, I should die with shame," said the squeamish waiting-woman.

"I don't know that two sailors are worse than one soldier, and we always had one at Marmorice Bay."

"Young man," said Bell, putting her head out to the one who walked up and down, "we can't sleep a wink whilst you go pacing up and down, and singing that improper song about 'And to my throbbing breast catch Nancy.' I only hope Nancy is your

wife. Are you married, young man?" This was said in a softer tone of interrogation.

The man grumbled something about orders to watch, but at the same moment his foot, as was before stated, struck against something which looked like a small black pig. He called his companion, and they sat down on the sand to examine what the queer fish might be. Their noses pronounced it to be excellent raki; their palates confirmed the opinion. After drinking a mouthful each, they choked and gazed at each other with starting eyeballs. One suggested an addition of water to the beverage, but there was none very near, and Jack feared, if he went to fetch any, that Will would take an unfair advantage of his absence to finish the skin of spirit; so they ultimately determined to take turn and turn in their devotion to the raki, and before they had finished more than half the contents of the bottle, they were stretched on the sand in insensibility as deep as death.

The women slept also; but not having indulged in "potations pottle deep," they were more easily aroused. Indeed, they must have been under the spell of opium had they not awoke in the ungentle pressure of strange and unscrupulous arms, which twisted muslin veils round and round their faces till they were nearly suffocated, and then two of them carrying the women out of the tent, a few of the remainder stripped it of all its valuable furniture, and the jewels which Lady Bab had worn, and then,

stepping over the prostrate and unconscious sailors, they mounted their horses and dromedaries, and scoured across the sands towards the desert, in their progress whither they were seen by Perth on his return from his night excursion.

Perth, whatever might have been his awe at the sight of the ghostly-looking horsemen, was aware that such a night-flitting could mean no good to the British camp. He could not suspect the raid made on Lady Barbara, as he did not know she had slept on shore; but he proceeded at once to head-quarters to report to the officer of the watch what he had witnessed. The officer thought nothing of it. It appeared that Perth had observed a group of Arab horsemen, and heard, as he stated, screams and laughter, or shouts. There seemed nothing tangible in this. The purloining of a few stray articles from the camp was probably the utmost of the outrage. The officer was no more aware than Perth that any Englishwomen had slept on shore; and, if Arab females had strayed on forbidden ground, their male relatives were justified in carrying them off without consulting their inclinations: supposing this to have been the case, it would have satisfactorily accounted for the shrieks and the savage laughter the young interpreter had heard.

Perth had done his duty, and, caring little for the matter, he went to sleep to recover from the fatigue and terror of his night's walk.

In the meantime, how fared Lady Barbara and Bell? Did it ever happen to the reader to see a nurse whose temper had given way under the squallings of a fractious child, and who, instead of dancing it gently on her knee, jolts it up and down by combined efforts of foot and arm, in the vain hope of stopping its noise by arresting its breath with sudden jerks? Thus were the unfortunate women compelled to unwilling saltation on the backs of their hygeems, which, with heads and tails erect, went tearing along, screaming as they went, with forelegs thrown forward, stepping at least three feet high in their trot. An Arab held each fair one tightly embraced by one arm, whilst with the other he guided as well as he could the rampant beast. Their faces were so far uncovered, now they had left the camp, that they could breathe, but their arms were tightly bound in front of them, lest they should use their nails to the detriment of their captors.

Lady Barbara's camel was the rougher of the two. The sensation has been since described, by one of the most truthful as well as the most entertaining of travellers, as having your spine driven by a sledge-hammer from below half a foot deeper into the scull. The Arabs, however, this author says, are so case-hardened that, though the voice is emitted from the chest in tuneless jerks during the performance, they rather enjoy the exercise, and, no doubt, consider it healthful. As for the unhappy Lady Barbara, having

been so delicately reared that, like Anne of Austria, it might be said that a pair of rough sheets would be a sufficient purgatory in the next world to expiate double the number of her sins, her sufferings were not to be described. Her cries, her threats, came from her lips syllable by syllable, utterly disjointed. She and her captor bounded up and down like tennis-balls. They were flung into the air and came down simultaneously; but, whilst it was rather agreeable than not to the Arab, it was racking torture to the lady—the fable of the boy and the frogs repeated.

But terrible as were Lady Bab's sufferings, they were but begun. The mimosa scrub was in view, and the driver induced the camels to pass quickly by the first and lowest of the plantations, which were, as I have stated, about three feet in height. The beasts, however, had caught sight of the soft green leaves, and the temptation was too powerful to resist when they were seen a second time.

A magnificent specimen of the mimosa, with a wide-spreading head, in the dawning glory alike of spring-time and sunrise, attracted the small eyes of the wilful beast which had the honour of occasioning the involuntary dances of Lady Barbara. The driver saw the danger, and tried to turn the camel on one side. He might as well have tried to turn the course of the Niagara. The hygeem shook its ugly head, gave a roar of defiance, and made a rush at the tempting food, which, soft, fresh, green, and succulent

at the top, is begirt with thorns, standing out like fish-hooks, from the bottom, and arming all its branches with tenacious weapons of offence. The Arab perceived that there was just room enough for the camel to pass under the mimosa, but that both himself and his fair burden must be caught in the embraces of this plant, which in no way seems to deserve the character of sensitive, except in the effects it produces on others. The crash came, prepared for by the Arab, as far as he could, by forcing the lady's face against his breast, and butting out his own head to meet the shock. He knew that they had small chance of remaining on the dromedary. With one arm he held Lady Barbara, and with the other he tried to guard himself and his charge. Alas! in an instant he was on his back on the sand. The camel-saddle was on the ground. Lady Barbara had rolled off on one side, her clothes torn off, her arms and back streaming from the teeth of the unceremonious rakes, through which she had unwillingly been attempting to pass. The Arab was still more dismantled. Knowing that the value of the lady depended in a great degree on her personal appearance, and that the sheik would make short work of him if the prize were so far damaged as to be valueless, he had saved her as much as he could at his own expense. He was streaming with blood, and looked as if a leopard had been clawing him in rage or play.

The horsemen stopped to survey, and as far as they could to remedy, the disaster. Lady Bab was picked up, moaned over, and her face examined with the amount of anxious interest shown by the owner of a thorough-bred, who has ridden without knee-caps, and who looks eagerly at the knees, lest the skin should be broken. Seeing that the face was not scratched, they rolled her round in some shawls, and, notwithstanding her piteous entreaties for rest, she was remounted on the replaced saddle—for the hygeem not having stirred from the mimosa heads, on which he had made an agreeable breakfast, was easily made captive—and thus she proceeded to the next halting-place. Here they delivered over the women to the care of some Arab females, and these informed the less humane warriors that if the ladies were worth carrying away they were worth keeping alive, and that without rest they would die. Bell was placed on some mats by the side of her mistress. They had screamed till they were hoarse, and could only croak out their expressions of despair. Their limbs seemed dislocated, and every inch of their frames ached, as if they had suffered a violent castigation. Notwithstanding all that they had endured, they were remarkably hungry, and looked with some interest at the process of grinding some wheat between two stones. "We shall die before we get any bread," said Bell, in despair, from her mats; "they haven't ground the corn yet!" In a sur-

prisingly short time, however, the cakes were made, as thinly rolled as a sheet of paper, and very crisp and agreeable to the palate, though Bell observed that, like thin slices of salt beef, it was difficult to get enough to satisfy hunger. Then the ladies drank with satisfaction some boiled milk from the camel, after which they both slept for nine hours without any rocking — probably because they had had so much previously.

When the sailor sentinels awoke on the following morning, the one who had the advantage over the other of having his eyelids opposed directly to the line of horizontal light of the new-born day, kicked his companion, and called him a lubberly landsman for sleeping there, when he ought to have been ready to serve the ladies with hot water or coffee.

The spokesman was still stupid, notwithstanding his reproaches to his messmate, and they both sat down on the sand outside the tent, with a look of drunken importance in their faces. Half within and half without the tent was the empty skin of raki. It struck one of the men that it ought to be buried in the sand, and he suggested it to his companion, who agreed that it would be necessary, but asserted that, as his friend Jack had found it first, he was bound to take the trouble of concealing it. The other replied that Bill had had the last mouthful, and it was consequently his place to

dispose of the empty bottle. Jack then thought of a clever device, which was to roll it under the tent, and give the ladies the discredit of it. They were so quiet that they were, no doubt, still asleep. So he insinuated it softly under the folds of the tent, and then gave it a little impetus, expecting it would be arrested in its progress by the heads of the ladies, instead of which it rolled out on the opposite side of the tent, where the tent-peg had been loosened by the unceremonious intruders of the previous night. Jack was so astonished at the result of his manœuvre, that, hearing no remonstrance from within, he lifted the side of the canvas softly, and finding the tent empty, gave vent to a long whistle of wonder and dismay. The first relief was a thought that the ladies might be taking a walk that fine morning; but the hope was dashed to the ground by the state of the tent, which was stripped of all its valuable contents, and if the late occupants had desired to enjoy some exercise, they would scarcely have taken their beds with them.

"It was the devil himself that put that raki in the way," said Will, consulting a soldier on the subject, having in his trouble lost his jealousy of the sister service.

"Very like," said the red-coat, musing. "I saw a black fellow creeping about near the lady's tent last night."

As for the unhappy culprits, they knew that their backs would have to smart for the illicit comfort they had bestowed on the reverse parts of their persons, and agreed that the sooner they returned to the admiral's ship, and gave themselves up to get it over, the better.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"Her glance how wildly beautiful! how much
Hath Phœbus wooed in vain to spoil her cheek,
Which glows yet smoother from his amorous clutch!"

BYRON.

AT an early hour Perth was summoned to the presence of the commander-in-chief, to give a statement of what he had observed. He found Lord Meith with Sir Ralph, in great distress of mind in consequence of the abduction of his niece. A hurried consultation followed as to what was to be done. The admiral was eager to pursue the fugitives with an armed force, and retake the ladies at once, but Sir Ralph interposed various prudential reasons why it was unadvisable. In the first place, the marauders were all well mounted, while they had no horses. Secondly, had they animals as fleet as the Arabs of whom they were in search, how could they tell in what direction to look for them over a sandy desert, where the first light wind dispersed every track of the hoof-prints? The only feasible plan seemed to Sir Ralph to wait till the Arabs came into camp again, and then offer a large reward for the knowledge as to where the captors had retreated, and

a heavy ransom for the women when they were discovered.

"Good heavens!" said the impetuous old sailor, "would you have me go back to my ship and sit down quietly to await the chance coming in of those tawny-skinned devils, when I don't know to what violence my poor niece and her maid may not be exposed? I'll give a thousand pounds to any one who will help to recover Lady Barbara, and she shall give another if she gets back alive."

"If I may be permitted to offer a suggestion," said Perth, flushing slightly with the embarrassment of speaking in the presence of men so superior to himself in rank and age, "it seems to me that nothing can be done by violence. The hour will soon come when the Arabs bring in their provisions for sale. I will try to find out by bribes in what direction their countrymen carried the ladies. We must be prepared for their dissembling the truth, but it is only through the Arabs that we can obtain any communication with the captives. You may take comfort, sir," continued the youth, addressing the admiral, "in the thought that the ladies were probably carried off that a large sum might be obtained for their ransom, and that they will be well used on that account." Perth said this because he pitied the distress in the countenance of the old admiral. His own suspicion, from the expression of the sheik's face when regarding the women,

led him to a different view of the subject. "I will do all in my power, my lord," he went on to say, "not for the sake of the pecuniary reward alone, but in the hope of relieving your anxiety by placing your niece safe on board your vessel."

"Which she ought never to have left," observed Sir Ralph drily, fretted, when such large interests were at stake, that his attention should be claimed for such an unnecessary anxiety. "To you, young man, I have a few words to say. My charger is still lame, and I had better buy from you the one you lent me. Horses are scarce, and this one suits me. I will give you a hundred pounds for him. You don't seem able to persuade those black devils to part with their horses?"

"No, sir; they ask a very long price for them; nor have they them in sufficient quantities to supply an army. I might get ten or twelve for officers, but for some of the pure breed they ask as much as a thousand or twelve hundred pounds."

"How do you think of proceeding?"

"I must obtain a horse or a camel," said Perth, "and stain my skin, adopting the native dress. They will thus be more disposed to let me pass unquestioned, and should I be detected, the friendly terms on which I have placed myself with the natives will be my safeguard, I trust, from violence, and may dispose them to assist me in my search."

It was determined, therefore, to wait till the Arabs

came in, and try to obtain information from them. Sir Ralph could not afford to embroil himself with them, as the victualling of his army depended on their supplies. To all Perth's interrogatories they gave unsatisfactory answers, and though one or two promised to bring him a horse on the following morning to purchase, Perth could not but fear that the hopes they held out of supplying him were illusory. Perth was dispirited at the disappointment. He could not set off over the sands on foot, and should he attempt anything so childish, he would probably die of hunger and thirst before he reached any Arab encampment. If he had but the charger he had sold to the general, how valuable the possession might be to him now! He could only wait to take the chance of a horse being brought in by the Arabs; for on the eve of a battle he could not expect any of the staff officers to part with their chargers to permit him to search for a wilful woman, who deserved, they would say, the fate she had met with.

Night came, and Perth set out once more to the desert to conceal the hundred pounds, and the additional gold he had received also that day from the stewards on the bargains concluded between them and the Arabs. The moon was brighter than ever, he thought, this night. The sands were yellower; the distant range of land beyond them was of deep purple. The palms stood out with their

graceful heads against the clear sky, on which the silvery stars showed a softened light, more blended and harmonious than the glare of day. He hastened to the heap of stones, and having deposited the gold, looked around, in the expectation of seeing the appearance which fancy had invested with the form of Leah. There it was as usual, but if it were the apparition of Leah, she must be bearing palm branches, for her arms were laden by some foliage. This time Perth would not be daunted by superstitious terrors. He advanced steadily towards the figure. It retreated. In his determination not to suffer his attention to wander for an instant, he kept his eyes fixed unwinkingly on the phantom. "You shall not evade me longer," he shouted. It seemed to skim along the plain. The white garments flying out behind gave the appearance of wings to the vanishing form. Perth ran till he was breathless, his feet sinking into the heavy sand. The image seemed to fly in a circle towards the other side of the heap of stones in which he had deposited his gold. Perth was resolved to cut off this retreat if it were one. He recovered his breath, and recommenced the chase, taking care to keep between the phantom and the cairn. At length he found that the image became more distinct. He was gaining on it; a few minutes more and he should judge whether it were tangible. He sees it no longer; it seems to have sunk into the earth.

He comes up to the spot to examine where it had disappeared, and there, utterly breathless and exhausted, with arms extended above her head, in complete prostration, seemingly, of mind as well as of body, lay the helpless figure of an Arab girl, the soft foliage of the mimosa scattered around her, as it had fallen from her hands in her flight.

Perth turned the body of the girl, and lifted her head to receive the night breeze. She was too feeble to resist, and the breath of the youth came and went in short gasps, so that any murmured words of consolation were unintelligible. So soon as any movement was possible on the part of the maiden, she strove to remove herself from the arm that upheld her. It was a sudden struggle, like that of a captured animal, ceasing as suddenly from feebleness, or a consciousness that strength for ultimate defence or flight was hopeless. Perth remembered the ruffled plumage and incessant opening and shutting of the beak of a young swallow which had fallen from its nest, and been picked up by Leah in former days. She had kept it with her soft warm hand closed round it, from the idea that she was bestowing comfort, and that the bird would die if she laid it down, when Perth persuaded her that its breathlessness resulted from terror, and that it would get better sooner if laid down on the soft grass and left alone.

It required a sacrifice on the part of the boy to

release the girl from his embrace. She might start up as the swallow had done, spread her wings, and fly away; but Perth could never bear the sight of suffering or terror in any human being or in any animal, and sweeping the loose sand together with one arm, he made it in the form of a pillow, and laid her head on it, retiring to a short distance, that she might feel herself to be a free agent. "I hope she will not want to fly off again," he thought. "She is pretty well spent, and can't go far." He was recovering his own breath now, and began to think what he could say to establish some kind of confidence on her part towards him. "I wish I might take off that veil, which must interfere with her breathing," he said. "No wonder I thought it was the ghost of Leah bound in grave-clothes."

He began to repeat one of the Arab songs in the collection of Carlyle's "Specimens of Arabic." In a short time the girl sat up, and turned on the youth her liquid eyes, which gleamed with astonishment.

"Thou art not of my nation, yet thou knowest my tongue," she said at length. "Oh, stranger youth! thou wilt not stain the fine steel of thy yataghan with the blood of a maiden?"

"May afreets bear me to torture if such a thought passed through my mind! But tell me, why hast thou lingered here for many nights, and where is thy tribe, that thou art seemingly severed from thy kin?"

"Oh, youth! I have a friend concealed from sight. She loves me more than any one in the world. She has conveyed me in safety from the desert on which the father of thy handmaid perished. Seek not, generous youth, to penetrate my secret. No one knows the place of my retreat. If I am found, I shall be slain."

"Alas! I would rather die than that thou shouldst suffer. Look upon me, maiden, that thou mayst read truth in my eyes."

She turned her long, soft glances on the English youth, and believed his assurance.

"Who is thy friend?" said he. "Will she be angry that thou shouldst confide in me?"

The lower lids of the girl were elevated, and Perth could guess that she smiled.

"She speaks not in our language," the maiden replied, "but I often talk to her, and fancy that she knows what I say."

"Is she dumb? is she sacred to Allah?" (meaning mad), said the youth gravely.

"Shall I show her to thee? Thou wilt not betray her or me?"

"The truth dwells in me. I betray none," said Perth; "but tell me thy name."

"Aza," replied the Arab girl. "And thine?"

"Perth."

She tried to pronounce the syllable, but failed. Perse, she called it, and the youth nodded his head,

perfectly satisfied with the attempt and the failure. She rose from the ground, and in doing so the veil dropped from the lower part of her face, leaving only the white muslin which fell over the magnificent tresses of her black hair. She looked at Perth shyly, as if she doubted the effect of her personal appearance. She needed not. Her nose was delicately formed, her upper lip short; her mouth finely and delicately chiselled; her chin rounded and dimpled. Her skin, which was like satin in smoothness, and soft as down, was that of a light brunette in Europe. Over her forehead hung pieces of mother-of-pearl, proving her to be a virgin.

"Maiden, thy beauty is pleasant to me. It is grateful to my eyes as the first soft rising of the moon when I tread the desert alone, or as the wave of the Nile to the shore that has thirsted for its rising waters."

She answered not for a moment, and then stooping, she picked up the foliage of the mimosa she had dropped in her terror. Without further parley, she placed them in his arms, and proceeded to strip the tree of its leaves as far as she could reach, though the thorns catching her light drapery denuded the slender arms, which showed as white in the moonlight as those of a European lady. Perth laid down his load, and having picked as many as they could carry, she said, "Come!" and preceded him towards the heap of stones, but to the opposite side to the

place where Perth had hidden his gold. The colour of the stones was dark, and a large fragment stood as if making part of the heap, but in reality at a few feet distant from it. Thus seeming either by day or night, unless the spectator were in close proximity, no entrance was visible. To this spot Aza advanced, and Perth followed her through the mouth of a narrow cavern that widened as they descended. A tenuous thread of light accompanied them for the first few seconds, when Perth thought that they were going into realms of impenetrable night, but a few steps showed a large vaulted space, glowing with the red light of a decaying fire. Aza went towards it, and threw on some decayed branches of the mimosa. The flame leaped up, and showed itself reflected in the bosom of a large subterranean fresh-water lake. The air was cool and agreeable to Perth, notwithstanding the fire, which he found Aza kept, like that of the vestals, ever burning, from the difficulty of relighting it. The scene affected him with a feeling of awe, which was increased by the hollow sound of his voice when he addressed Aza, his words being repeated by a dozen mocking echoes. She went still further forward, and turning a point of rock, disappeared, and Perth heard the glad neighing of a horse, seemingly delighted with the bundle of mimosa leaves the girl had taken in her arms.

"Come and see her," said she; and Perth, follow-

ing where her footsteps had led, found himself again in her presence, and in that of a beautiful Arab mare, over whose neck the girl hung caressingly.

"This is she on whom I depend, O stranger! This is she who bore my father and me from the knife of one who sought to slay us. Each night I bring food enough to last till the moon shines once more on the sands, and I go out unseen."

"Not always," said the youth, smiling.

"Ah! I thought not of a stranger on these sands. The men of my nation come on camels or horses, and in numbers. It would not suit them to linger where spoil cannot be found; and few know where lies the subterranean lake. When I first made a fire here, a lion rushed away with a hideous roar, which made my blood grow cold. He was alarmed, and never returned. I watched him speeding over the plain, his tail lashing the sand. I think some sparks of the burning wood must have flown on him, and scorched his hide. I have heard that in old times," continued Aza, "our forefathers used to encamp on the sands outside to drink the cool waters of the lake. No one can tell its depth, nor how far it is across. No light can ever be thrown to so great a distance; but it was said that of many who went to dip their water-skins in the waves, few ever again saw the light of day; and that ginns and afreets caught them in their arms, and bore them down to caverns beneath the waters, whence they send mocking sounds of

human speech, either of joy or of woe, as they are uttered by the human voice."

"And thou fearest them not, beautiful Aza?"

"I fear not anything," the maiden replied.

"Why dost thou live here, and not with thy tribe?" inquired Perth.

"I wait to join myself to some tribe who may come when the white faces have left the desert sands. I shall seek some family, and be to the father of the tribe as a daughter, to the brothers as a sister—it may be as a wife," she added simply; and the speech gave a pang to the breast of Perth for which he could not account.

"Why didst thou leave thy own father and mother?" he said uneasily.

"My mother was slain in a raid on our village. They dwelt in a village, and remembered not that their kinsman had been guilty of shedding blood. My father was hunting with his hawk, my mother ground corn. There was a hole where the fire used to be kindled to bake the lambs or kids that my father brought from his flock. My mother looked forth from the doorway. She saw the men of blood approach. She knew that her hour was come, and she feared for me. She put me in the baking-hole, and placed the stone at the top, threatening me that I might not cry. I trembled and lay still. There was a little light and space to breathe. I heard a struggle and a deep sigh, and all was silent, only

something warm dropped on my shoulder. It was my mother's blood. At night my father came. He wept, and stained his hands with indigo, and rolling my mother's body in a winding-sheet, carried it to the burial-place in the mountains. When next a party of Arabs came by, my father joined himself to their tribe, for the sheik was friendly towards him. But this ruler died, and his son was sheik in his place. He loved the stranger in the tent, and wooed me to be his wife."

"And thou wert willing?" asked Perth.

"The sheik found not favour in my eyes; but he wooed me with rich gifts, and I was sad, for his mother was to me as my own mother might have been. A fakeer came one day to our tent. He saw a mark on the back of my hand, and he told the sheik that my father and I were of the race accursed to him for the Thar, or blood-guiltiness. The sheik was very sad, for it was his duty to kill the father of her he loved. Then his mother arose and hung on my neck, and kissed me and wept. She took her own horse and placed on it stores of provisions, and said to my father—'Fly with thy daughter. The avenger of blood is behind thee. Three days and four hours thou mayst travel before my son riseth up to pursue thee.' Then she described to us this cavern and the subterranean lake, and bade me fear no afreet, for I was a pure maiden, and no evil spirit could harm

me. We returned first to the village where I had dwelt with my parents. The spoiler had been there; it was in ruins. There were no towns, no tents; the plains were without herds of sheep. The sands had choked up the water-courses; the canals were known only to have existed by the waving grass which had grown more luxuriously from the streams they conducted, and now rustled their withered stems in the passing breeze. Over the thistles, matted together by the wild creeping plants, the antelope bounded without terror of living creatures. The rains had washed the sand from the walls of our dwelling. I dismounted, and saw the hole in which my mother's love had concealed me. The white circular stone was broken in two by its side; an ostrich had deposited her eggs within the aperture. We took some, and lived on them for many days; but my father was sick at heart. He bore not patiently the memory of his great sorrow—the sight of his mighty desolation. Then he said—'Oh that it would please Allah to destroy me; that he would loosen his arrows and cut me off! for my soul is weary of my life.' My father wept and ceased not. I fell into deep sleep when the stars came out. When the sun rose up, he was not—even as one who goeth down into the pit. I wrapped his abba round him, and pulled stones over his cold corpse, and lifted up my voice in the solitude, and wept. Then I came to this

cavern, for I thought of my foster-mother's advice. Stranger, I have spoken."

"Dost thou not require food now?" said Perth.

"I have enough and for thee," said the girl, producing her store of dates and thin bread.

Perth broke off a small bit of the thin cake, and also a few dates, knowing the insult that a refusal to partake of hospitality would convey.

"Why didst thou not join the tribe of Arabs who brought meats, and sheep, and fruits for sale to the white man's camp?"

"I watched them as they passed in the morning. I thought their sheik had an evil countenance, and I feared lest he should take from me my beautiful Koeyla—my best friend. She is descended in a direct line from one of the five mares of the Prophet. She is one of the Wathna Khersan, because worth her weight in gold. No horse can equal her for beauty or speed. Stranger, knowest thou a noble animal when thou seest it? On her back thou mightest defy the spears of a hostile tribe; she would fly faster than the lances flung from their hands. Look at her arching neck, her prominent eye, her small head, and delicate mouth. She is my pride, my glory, my all, as she was the most valued possession of my foster-mother."

The girl caressed the head of her beautiful favourite, who received the pressure of her hand and cheek as if she knew that she was petted. She

was sweet-tempered as well as high-spirited, for to submit to being coaxed she had to drop a tempting branch of young mimosa leaves; but Aza consoled her by a handful of dates. Perth had seen many good Arabs, but never one so beautiful in form and colour as this one. She was of a soft cream colour, with a skin so delicate that the pink tinged her nose and mouth. Her fetlock joints were long, the hoofs circular, the ears delicately small, and pink as a shell internally.

The fire blazed up, and showed Aza, as she stood in her dark loveliness, leaning on her favourite, and looking at Perth in allowable pride in her horse's beauty and value. The border of her veil was embroidered with diminutive white shells, which glittered in the fire-light; and on her brow drooped from her head the ornament of mother-of-pearl indicating virginity—the shebeyka. Her figure, though small, was well-proportioned and slight. She had evidently been considered the favoured daughter of the late sheik, for bracelets of gold bound her arms. Thus, standing by the side of her mare, she was a fortune worthy of alliance with a mighty Arab chief. Perth was divided by his desire to get her out of the cavern, and his dread lest she should be appropriated when seen by some fortunate warrior amongst her own race or his. He could not help thinking that the cavern must be damp, forgetting that the dryness of the atmosphere

obviated any just cause for anxiety on such a score.

"Where dost thou sleep, Aza?" he said.

She pointed to a roll of carpet at a few yards' distance from where the mare was feeding.

"Dost thou tie her up?"

"Of course not. Sometimes she comes and lies down gently by my side."

"Wilt thou sit by my side on this carpet?" inquired Perth. "I want to consult thee. Perhaps thou canst help me. Tell me; knowest thou of any means by which stolen property may be recovered from the children of the desert?"

"Thou mayst first tell me what the stolen property may be. If it be sheep or lambs, they cannot be restored, for they will have been eaten. If it be articles of attire, they may be surrendered, but it is said that the white faces love not what a child of the desert has borne on his body. If it be arms, the Arabs desire them greedily, and will not restore them. If it be gold, as it is not so much valued as arms, it may not be refused if rifles or pistols are offered for it."

"Alas!" cried Perth, "it is two of my countrywomen!" and the brow of the youth grew dark and sad at the thought of the degradation to which they might be exposed.

"How sayest thou?" exclaimed the girl. "Did your warriors sleep, or were their swords sheathed

and too rusty to withdraw from their coverings, that two women were carried from the camp of the mighty ones? Had my foster-mother and sisters been attacked, their relatives would have fought and died like men ere their sisters were polluted by the touch of strange men."

The eyes of the Arab maiden flashed fire as she thought of the possible degradation.

Perth said sadly, "It was so; our men slept, and the women were carried captive; and now tell unto me—I would get on their track in the hope of bribing the ravishers to give up their prey—canst thou assist me? Knowest thou how the Arab tribe may be pursued and overtaken, and treated with to accept ransom for their prisoners?"

The girl looked slowly up from her knees, round which her arms were entwined.

"Youth, dost thou love one of the maidens?" she said suspiciously.

Perth thought of Lady Bab and Bell, and the gravity of the occasion and place could not check his disposition to mirth. He laughed aloud, and the unusual cachination was caught up by the mysterious echoes with mocking repetitions, which put the youth out of countenance.

"No, beautiful stranger," said he; "I love them not, except as thou mayst regard any member of the tribe in which thou wast reared. I have never loved, if I love not now," he said softly and ear-

nestly, for fear that the discountenancing echoes might throw doubts on the truth of his asseveration.

"Wouldst thou dare danger to rescue thy countrywomen, Perse?" said the girl anxiously.

She had been taught to regard animal courage as the chief merit in a man. She had listened to the song improvised by her native poets in praise of deeds of daring performed by Arab warriors, the recitation of which, in the quiet tents in the evenings whilst encamped in the desert, had driven the listeners almost to frenzy—the men starting up and shaking their quivering lances at the description of a battle, or sinking into tears when the hero fell overwhelmed by foes, or dragged his wounded body to die in the shadow of his tent. Such music as this, scarcely more than words uttered in a monotone, and accompanied by the two strings stretched over the shell of the tortoise, striking the feelings of the glowing Eastern warriors, produced effects more forcible than the magnificent combinations of sounds emitted by our military bands on our own soldiery. In one instance a spark is flung on dry grass, in the other we try to light a bonfire on an iceberg. The small means produce extraordinary effects in one case; the grand preparations end in something like failure, from the nature of the material we strive to kindle.

Aza saw a fair exterior in her companion. She

looked at the width of his shoulders and his nervous hands, unlike the dark, slender fingers of her countrymen, and was eager to know if a valour as fiery existed in the disposition of her new acquaintance as in the bosom of her proposed lover, the sheik.

"Wouldst thou dare danger to rescue thy countrywomen?" she repeated.

"I would," said Perth quietly.

He was a conscientious youth, and was asking himself whether the willingness he felt to dare danger did not arise more from his desire to possess the two thousand pounds than from any enthusiasm about Lady Barbara and Bell, whom he did not particularly like; but he thought of the distress of the sailor uncle, and answered more warmly—

"Yes, I would do much to rescue them; but how? Canst thou tell me how to track them?"

"I cannot," said the Arab girl. "I must do it myself;" and she said, turning towards Perth tenderly, "if I do it"—she stopped, a natural feeling of modesty arresting the words which rose to her lips —"it must be for love of thee."

"If thou canst do it, why should not I?"

She smiled sadly.

"Thou hast not dwelt in the desert since thy steps first printed small pits in the sand. Thou hast not been taught as I have to know every mark on its wide surface that the passing breeze has left unruffled. Thou canst not know, as I do, to watch the

circles of the desert dust, and take up the track again which the varying wind has left untouched. Stranger, thou mayst not go. Thou hast no horse."

Perth answered not, but looked to where the sagacious mare was devouring her supper in silence, and then his eyes sought those of Aza.

Now Aza felt that she was beginning to love Perth very dearly, and that she should not mind encountering danger, and even death, for him; but to allow him to ride her Arab she was not prepared. I am sorry for my heroine. She must be thought unnatural and cold-hearted, but she had been taught almost to worship this mare, and when her foster-mother had given her to Aza, she felt almost consoled for her exile from her tribe by the possession of the greatest treasure the Bedouins had possessed.

She answered the appealing look of Perth by these words—

"I cannot lend thee Koeyla."

"Then," said Perth, rather shortly, "I must give up the notion of overtaking the English ladies for want of a horse."

"There are horses in the camp of the white faces," said Aza, "and these maidens are of that tribe."

"The warriors fight soon against those of another tribe," replied Perth; "they want all their horses, and the Arabs will not sell any to them."

"Then they care more for fighting than for their

women," was the girl's retort; and Perth was silent. "If I were to lend thee my darling, my light, my blessing, thou wouldst not return her to me. She would be taken from thee unharmed, for no true Arab will aim at a horse; but thou wouldst be cut to pieces, and thy limbs left for the eagles and the jackals to prey upon."

"And thou?" said the youth.

"My danger would be great, but not so great as thine. I would seek the wife or the mother of the sheik, and tempt her by the hope of precious stones, and gorgeous shawls from the bales of Cashmere. I would speak of rifles that kill unerringly for her sons and his followers."

"And gold?" said Perth interrogatively.

"Gold is useless to us, save what it will bring," said the girl. "What should we do with it—bury it in the sand? 'Tis heavy to carry." Perth assented inwardly. "Should we bury it, no fruit-bearing date will spring up to tell where it lies; no wheat to gladden the heart of the reaper. Our children of the desert delight in their horses to bear them against a foe; their spears and their guns to bring them down; their camels to bear away the spoil they take from their enemies. Then they sit in their tents and listen to the songs of their poets, and plan more warfare for the time to come."

"Maiden," said Perth, "be the danger small or great, it must be encountered by me; but not by thee. It is nothing to thee that an old man tears his grey hairs and weeps for the disgrace which has fallen on his brother's child. I have seen his sorrow, and I must seek to turn it into joy. Tell me how I can get a horse or a camel to carry me on the track of the robbers."

"Were I to give thee Koeyla, she would be useless to thee without the knowledge which I cannot give thee of the *Athr*. Supposing thou didst come on the track of the tribe thou seekest, and another tribe crossed it, how wouldst thou, all unaccustomed to the sand-marks, know which to follow?"

"And couldst thou trace the robbers?"

Aza answered indirectly, "It is as Allah wills. But he who leaves the footsteps of his horse or his camel on the sands leaves a thread to guide the avenger even to the tent of his refuge, should six days' journeys have been passed over."

Perth looked at Aza thoughtfully.

"But if they see thy beauty," he exclaimed, "those wild warriors of whom thou speakest will make thee the captive of their bow and their spear, and I shall never see thee again."

"Will that grieve thee?" said the girl gently.

"So much that thou shalt not go."

She looked at Perth with a peculiar smile of

amusement, and said, "Wouldst thou tell the wild bird that settles for an instant on the top of thy tent that it shall fly never again?"

"I would that my bird came to my call," replied Perth, "and it should not venture abroad when the butcher-bird is on the wing."

Perth, in his contemplation of this lovely creature, was forgetting all but the happiness of being with her. She felt desirous of getting rid of him, and looked at him uneasily.

"Wilt thou not depart?" she said at length.

"May I come again?" he inquired.

"Yes; to-morrow night."

She looked at him so sadly, that he said, suspiciously, "Thou wilt be here? Thou wilt not deceive me?"

"If I can, I will meet thee at the mimosa trees; or thou shalt come here. And may Allah grant us peace!"

She motioned with her hand that he should depart. Perth longed to press her to his breast, but he feared to offend her, and turned to depart. He looked back as he reached the mouth of the cavern, and saw the fire blazing up, with its thin eddies of smoke lost in the immense size of its vaulted roof. He saw the dark water illumined over by the glancing flame, and the slender figure of Aza leaning against the milk-white Arab. Her dark hair streamed over her horse's shoulder; her head

was depressed, and Perth fancied that she was weeping, and that he heard her sob. Then, with spirits depressed by evil auguries, he returned to the camp, to count the hours till he might be permitted again to seek the presence of the Arab maiden.

END OF VOL. II.

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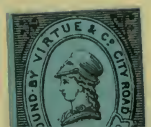
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